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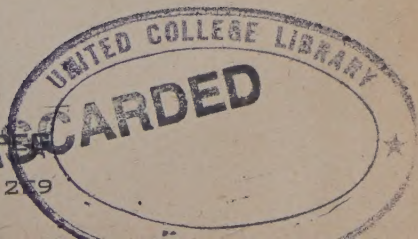
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THE WORKS OF  
WILKIE COLLINS

VOLUME THREE

*WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS*

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MAN AND WIFE

A Novel

(PART ONE)

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NEW YORK  
PETER FENELON COLLIER, PUBLISHER



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# MAN AND WIFE.

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*PROLOGUE.—THE IRISH MARRIAGE.*

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Part the First.

## THE VILLA AT HAMPSTEAD.

### I.

ON a summer's morning, between thirty and forty years ago, two girls were crying bitterly in the cabin of an East Indian passenger ship, bound outward, from Gravesend to Bombay.

They were both of the same age—eighteen. They had both, from childhood upward, been close and dear friends at the same school. They were now parting for the first time—and parting, it might be, for life.

The name of one was Blanche. The name of the other was Anne.

Both were the children of poor parents; both had been pupil-teachers at the school; and both were destined to earn their own bread. Personally speaking, and socially speaking, these were the only points of resemblance between them.

Blanche was passably attractive and passably

intelligent, and no more. Anne was rarely beautiful and rarely endowed. Blanche's parents were worthy people, whose first consideration was to secure, at any sacrifice, the future well-being of their child. Anne's parents were heartless and depraved. Their one idea, in connection with their daughter, was to speculate on her beauty, and to turn her abilities to profitable account.

The girls were starting in life under widely different conditions. Blanche was going to India, to be governess in the household of a Judge, under care of the Judge's wife. Anne was to wait at home until the first opportunity offered of sending her cheaply to Milan. There, among strangers, she was to be perfected in the actress's and the singer's art; then to return to England, and make the fortune of her family on the lyric stage.

Such were the prospects of the two as they sat together in the cabin of the Indiaman locked fast in each other's arms, and crying bitterly. The whispered farewell talk exchanged between them—exaggerated and impulsive as girls' talk is apt to be—came honestly, in each case, straight from the heart.

“Blanche! you may be married in India. Make your husband bring you back to England.”

“Anne! you may take a dislike to the stage. Come out to India if you do.”

“In England or out of England, married or not married, we will meet, darling—if it's years hence—with all the old love between us; friends

who help each other, sisters who trust each other, for life! Vow it, Blanche!"

"I vow it, Anne!"

"With all your heart and soul?"

"With all my heart and soul!"

The sails were spread to the wind, and the ship began to move in the water. It was necessary to appeal to the captain's authority before the girls could be parted. The captain interfered gently and firmly. "Come, my dear," he said, putting his arm round Anne; "you won't mind *me*! I have got a daughter of my own." Anne's head fell on the sailor's shoulder. He put her, with his own hands, into the shore-boat alongside. In five minutes more the ship had gathered way; the boat was at the landing-stage—and the girls had seen the last of each other for many a long year to come.

This was in the summer of eighteen hundred and thirty-one.

## II.

Twenty-four years later—in the summer of eighteen hundred and fifty-five—there was a villa at Hampstead to be let, furnished.

The house was still occupied by the persons who desired to let it. On the evening on which the scene opens a lady and two gentlemen were seated at the dinner-table. The lady had reached the mature age of forty-two. She was still a rarely beautiful woman. Her husband, some years younger than herself, faced her at the table, sitting silent and constrained, and never,

even by accident, looking at his wife. The third person was a guest. The husband's name was Vanborough. The guest's name was Kendrew.

It was the end of the dinner. The fruit and the wine were on the table. Mr. Vanborough pushed the bottles in silence to Mr. Kendrew. The lady of the house looked round at the servant who was waiting, and said, "Tell the children to come in."

The door opened, and a girl twelve years old entered, leading by the hand a younger girl of five. They were both prettily dressed in white, with sashes of the same shade of light blue. But there was no family resemblance between them. The elder girl was frail and delicate, with a pale, sensitive face. The younger was light and florid, with round red cheeks and bright, saucy eyes—a charming little picture of happiness and health.

Mr. Kendrew looked inquiringly at the youngest of the two girls.

"Here is a young lady," he said, "who is a total stranger to me."

"If you had not been a total stranger yourself for a whole year past," answered Mrs. Vanborough, "you would never have made that confession. This is little Blanche—the only child of the dearest friend I have. When Blanche's mother and I last saw each other we were two poor schoolgirls beginning the world. My friend went to India, and married there late in life. You may have heard of her husband—the famous Indian officer, Sir Thomas Lundie? Yes: 'the rich Sir Thomas,' as you call him. Lady Lun-

die is now on her way back to England, for the first time since she left it—I am afraid to say how many years since. I expected her yesterday; I expect her to-day—she may come at any moment. We exchanged promises to meet, in the ship that took her to India—‘vows’ we called them in the dear old times. Imagine how changed we shall find each other when we *do* meet again at last!”

“In the meantime,” said Mr. Kendrew, “your friend appears to have sent you her little daughter to represent her? It’s a long journey for so young a traveler.”

“A journey ordered by the doctors in India a year since,” rejoined Mrs. Vanborough. “They said Blanche’s health required English air. Sir Thomas was ill at the time, and his wife couldn’t leave him. She had to send the child to England, and who should she send her to but me? Look at her now, and say if the English air hasn’t agreed with her! We two mothers, Mr. Kendrew, seem literally to live again in our children. I have an only child. My friend has an only child. My daughter is little Anne—as *I* was. My friend’s daughter is little Blanche—as *she* was. And, to crown it all, those two girls have taken the same fancy to each other which *we* took to each other in the by-gone days at school. One has often heard of hereditary hatred. Is there such a thing as hereditary love as well?”

Before the guest could answer, his attention was claimed by the master of the house.



"Kendrew," said Mr. Vanborough, "when you have had enough of domestic sentiment, suppose you take a glass of wine?"

The words were spoken with undisguised contempt of tone and manner. Mrs. Vanborough's color rose. She waited, and controlled the momentary irritation. When she spoke to her husband it was evidently with a wish to soothe and conciliate him.

"I am afraid, my dear, you are not well this evening?"

"I shall be better when those children have done clattering with their knives and forks."

The girls were peeling fruit. The younger one went on. The elder stopped, and looked at her mother. Mrs. Vanborough beckoned to Blanche to come to her, and pointed toward the French window opening to the floor.

"Would you like to eat your fruit in the garden, Blanche?"

"Yes," said Blanche, "if Anne will go with me."

Anne rose at once, and the two girls went away together into the garden, hand in hand. On their departure Mr. Kendrew wisely started a new subject. He referred to the letting of the house.

"The loss of the garden will be a sad loss to those two young ladies," he said. "It really seems to be a pity that you should be giving up this pretty place."

"Leaving the house is not the worst of the sacrifice," answered Mrs. Vanborough. "If



John finds Hampstead too far for him from London, of course we must move. The only hardship that I complain of is the hardship of having the house to let."

Mr. Vanborough looked across the table, as ungraciously as possible, at his wife.

"What have *you* to do with it?" he asked.

Mrs. Vanborough tried to clear the conjugal horizon by a smile.

"My dear John," she said, gently, "you forget that, while you are at business, I am here all day. I can't help seeing the people who come to look at the house. Such people!" she continued, turning to Mr. Kendrew. "They distrust everything, from the scraper at the door to the chimneys on the roof. They force their way in at all hours. They ask all sorts of impudent questions—and they show you plainly that they don't mean to believe your answers, before you have time to make them. Some wretch of a woman says, 'Do you think the drains are right?'—and sniffs suspiciously, before I can say Yes. Some brute of a man asks, 'Are you quite sure this house is solidly built, ma'am?'—and jumps on the floor at the full stretch of his legs, without waiting for me to reply. Nobody believes in our gravel soil and our south aspect. Nobody wants any of our improvements. The moment they hear of John's Artesian well, they look as if they never drank water. And, if they happen to pass my poultry-yard, they instantly lose all appreciation of the merits of a fresh egg."

Mr. Kendrew laughed. "I have been through it all in my time," he said. "The people who want to take a house are the born enemies of the people who want to let a house. Odd, isn't it, Vanborough?"

Mr. Vanborough's sullen humor resisted his friend as obstinately as it had resisted his wife.

"I dare say," he answered. "I wasn't listening."

This time the tone was almost brutal. Mrs. Vanborough looked at her husband with unconcealed surprise and distress.

"John!" she said. "What *can* be the matter with you? Are you in pain?"

"A man may be anxious and worried, I suppose, without being actually in pain."

"I am sorry to hear you are worried. Is it business?"

"Yes—business."

"Consult Mr. Kendrew."

"I am waiting to consult him."

Mrs. Vanborough rose immediately. "Ring, dear," she said, "when you want coffee." As she passed her husband she stopped and laid her hand tenderly on his forehead. "I wish I could smooth out that frown!" she whispered. Mr. Vanborough impatiently shook his head. Mrs. Vanborough sighed as she turned to the door. Her husband called to her before she could leave the room.

"Mind we are not interrupted!"

"I will do my best, John." She looked at Mr. Kendrew, holding the door open for her;

and resumed, with an effort, her former lightness of tone. "But don't forget our 'born enemies!' Somebody may come, even at this hour of the evening, who wants to see the house."

The two gentlemen were left alone over their wine. There was a strong personal contrast between them. Mr. Vanborough was tall and dark—a dashing, handsome man; with an energy in his face which all the world saw; with an inbred falseness under it which only a special observer could detect. Mr. Kendrew was short and light—slow and awkward in manner, except when something happened to rouse him. Looking in *his* face, the world saw an ugly and undemonstrative little man. The special observer, penetrating under the surface, found a fine nature beneath, resting on a steady foundation of honor and truth.

Mr. Vanborough opened the conversation.

"If you ever marry," he said, "don't be such a fool, Kendrew, as I have been. Don't take a wife from the stage."

"If I could get such a wife as yours," replied the other, "I would take her from the stage tomorrow. A beautiful woman, a clever woman, a woman of unblemished character, and a woman who truly loves you. Man alive! what do you want more?"

"I want a great deal more. I want a woman highly connected and highly bred—a woman who can receive the best society in England, and open her husband's way to a position in the world."

"A position in the world!" cried Mr. Kendrew. "Here is a man whose father has left him half a million of money—with the one condition annexed to it of taking his father's place at the head of one of the greatest mercantile houses in England. And he talks about a position, as if he was a junior clerk in his own office! What on earth does your ambition see, beyond what your ambition has already got?"

Mr. Vanborough finished his glass of wine, and looked his friend steadily in the face.

"My ambition," he said, "sees a Parliamentary career, with a Peerage at the end of it—and with no obstacle in the way but my estimable wife."

Mr. Kendrew lifted his hand warningly. "Don't talk in that way," he said. "If you're joking—it's a joke I don't see. If you're in earnest—you force a suspicion on me which I would rather not feel. Let us change the subject."

"No! Let us have it out at once. What do you suspect?"

"I suspect you are getting tired of your wife."

"She is forty-two, and I am thirty-five; and I have been married to her for thirteen years. You know all that—and you only *suspect* I am tired of her. Bless your innocence! Have you anything more to say?"

"If you force me to it, I take the freedom of an old friend, and I say you are not treating her fairly. It's nearly two years since you broke up your establishment abroad, and came to En-

gland on your father's death. With the exception of myself, and one or two other friends of former days, you have presented your wife to nobody. Your new position has smoothed the way for you into the best society. You never take your wife with you. You go out as if you were a single man. I have reason to know that you are actually believed to be a single man, among these new acquaintances of yours, in more than one quarter. Forgive me for speaking my mind bluntly—I say what I think. It's unworthy of you to keep your wife buried here, as if you were ashamed of her."

"I *am* ashamed of her."

"Vanborough!"

"Wait a little! you are not to have it all your own way, my good fellow. What are the facts? Thirteen years ago I fell in love with a handsome public singer, and married her. My father was angry with me; and I had to go and live with her abroad. It didn't matter, abroad. My father forgave me on his death-bed, and I had to bring her home again. It does matter, at home. I find myself, with a great career opening before me, tied to a woman whose relations are (as you well know) the lowest of the low. A woman without the slightest distinction of manner, or the slightest aspiration beyond her nursery and her kitchen, her piano and her books. Is *that* a wife who can help me to make my place in society?—who can smooth my way, through social obstacles and political obstacles, to the House of Lords? By Jupiter! if ever

there was a woman to be 'buried' (as you call it), that woman is my wife. And, what's more, if you want the truth, it's because I *can't* bury her here that I'm going to leave this house. She has got a cursed knack of making acquaintances wherever she goes. She'll have a circle of friends about her if I leave her in this neighborhood much longer. Friends who remember her as the famous opera-singer. Friends who will see her swindling scoundrel of a father (when my back is turned) coming drunk to the door to borrow money of her! I tell you, my marriage has wrecked my prospects. It's no use talking to me of my wife's virtues. She is a millstone round my neck, with all her virtues. If I had not been a born idiot I should have waited, and married a woman who would have been of some use to me; a woman with high connections—"

Mr. Kendrew touched his host's arm, and suddenly interrupted him.

"To come to the point," he said—"a woman like Lady Jane Parnell."

Mr. Vanborough started. His eyes fell, for the first time, before the eyes of his friend.

"What do you know about Lady Jane?" he asked.

"Nothing. I don't move in Lady Jane's world—but I do go sometimes to the opera. I saw you with her last night in her box; and I heard what was said in the stalls near me. You were openly spoken of as the favored man who was singled out from the rest by Lady Jane. Imagine what would happen if your wife heard



that! You are wrong, Vanborough—you are in every way wrong. You alarm, you distress, you disappoint me. I never sought this explanation—but, now it has come, I won't shrink from it. Reconsider your conduct; reconsider what you have said to me—or you count me no longer among your friends. No! I want no further talk about it now. We are both getting hot—we may end in saying what had better have been left unsaid. Once more, let us change the subject. You wrote me word that you wanted me here to-day, because you needed my advice on a matter of some importance. What is it?"

Silence followed that question. Mr. Vanborough's face betrayed signs of embarrassment. He poured himself out another glass of wine, and drank it at a draught before he replied.

"It's not so easy to tell you what I want," he said, "after the tone you have taken with me about my wife."

Mr. Kendrew looked surprised.

"Is Mrs. Vanborough concerned in the matter?" he asked.

"Yes."

"Does she know about it?"

"No."

"Have you kept the thing a secret out of regard for *her*?"

"Yes."

"Have I any right to advise on it?"

"You have the right of an old friend."

"Then, why not tell me frankly what it is?"

There was another moment of embarrassment on Mr. Vanborough's part.

"It will come better," he answered, "from a third person, whom I expect here every minute. He is in possession of all the facts—and he is better able to state them than I am."

"Who is the person?"

"My friend Delamayn."

"Your lawyer?"

"Yes—the junior partner in the firm of Delamayn, Hawke, and Delamayn. Do you know him?"

"I am acquainted with him. His wife's family were friends of mine before he married. I don't like him."

"You're rather hard to please to-day? Delamayn is a rising man, if ever there was one yet. A man with a career before him, and with courage enough to pursue it. He is going to leave the Firm, and try his luck at the Bar. Everybody says he will do great things. What's your objection to him?"

"I have no objection whatever. We meet with people occasionally whom we dislike without knowing why. Without knowing why, I dislike Mr. Delamayn."

"Whatever you do, you must put up with him this evening. He will be here directly."

He was there at that moment. The servant opened the door, and announced—"Mr. Delamayn."

## III.

Externally speaking, the rising solicitor, who was going to try his luck at the Bar, looked like a man who was going to succeed. His hard, hairless face, his watchful gray eyes, his thin, resolute lips, said plainly, in so many words, "I mean to get on in the world; and, if you are in my way, I mean to get on at your expense." Mr. Delamayn was habitually polite to everybody—but he had never been known to say one unnecessary word to his dearest friend. A man of rare ability; a man of unblemished honor (as the code of the world goes); but not a man to be taken familiarly by the hand. You would never have borrowed money of him—but you would have trusted him with untold gold. Involved in private and personal troubles, you would have hesitated at asking him to help you. Involved in public and producible troubles, you would have said, Here is my man. Sure to push his way—nobody could look at him and doubt it—sure to push his way.

"Kendrew is an old friend of mine," said Mr. Vanborough, addressing himself to the lawyer. "Whatever you have to say to *me* you may say before *him*. Will you have some wine?"

"No—thank you."

"Have you brought any news?"

"Yes."

"Have you got the written opinions of the two barristers?"

“No.”

“Why not?”

“Because nothing of the sort is necessary. If the facts of the case are correctly stated there is not the slightest doubt about the law.”

With that reply Mr. Delamayn took a written paper from his pocket, and spread it out on the table before him.

“What is that?” asked Mr. Vanborough.

“The case relating to your marriage.”

Mr. Kendrew started, and showed the first tokens of interest in the proceedings which had escaped him yet. Mr. Delamayn looked at him for a moment, and went on.

“The case,” he resumed, “as originally stated by you, and taken down in writing by our head-clerk.”

Mr. Vanborough’s temper began to show itself again.

“What have we got to do with that now?” he asked. “You have made your inquiries to prove the correctness of my statement—haven’t you?”

“Yes.”

“And you have found out that I am right?”

“I have found out that you are right—if the case is right. I wish to be sure that no mistake has occurred between you and the clerk. This is a very important matter. I am going to take the responsibility of giving an opinion which may be followed by serious consequences; and I mean to assure myself that the opinion is given on a sound basis, first. I have some questions

to ask you. Don't be impatient, if you please. They won't take long."

He referred to the manuscript, and put the first question.

"You were married at Inchmallock, in Ireland, Mr. Vanborough, thirteen years since?"

"Yes."

"Your wife—then Miss Anne Silvester—was a Roman Catholic?"

"Yes."

"Her father and mother were Roman Catholics?"

"They were."

"Your father and mother were Protestants? and *you* were baptized and brought up in the Church of England?"

"All right!"

"Miss Anne Silvester felt, and expressed, a strong repugnance to marrying you, because you and she belonged to different religious communities?"

"She did."

"You got over her objection by consenting to become a Roman Catholic, like herself?"

"It was the shortest way with her—and it didn't matter to *me*."

"You were formally received into the Roman Catholic Church?"

"I went through the whole ceremony."

"Abroad or at home?"

"Abroad."

"How long was it before the date of your marriage?"

"Six weeks before I was married."

Referring perpetually to the paper in his hand, Mr. Delamayn was especially careful in comparing that last answer with the answer given to the head-clerk.

"Quite right," he said, and went on with his questions.

"The priest who married you was one Ambrose Redman—a young man recently appointed to his clerical duties?"

"Yes."

"Did he ask if you were both Roman Catholics?"

"Yes."

"Did he ask anything more?"

"No."

"Are you sure he never inquired whether you had both been Catholics *for more than one year before you came to him to be married?*"

"I am certain of it."

"He must have forgotten that part of his duty—or, being only a beginner, he may well have been ignorant of it altogether. Did neither you nor the lady think of informing him on the point?"

"Neither I nor the lady knew there was any necessity for informing him."

Mr. Delamayn folded up the manuscript, and put it back in his pocket.

"Right," he said, "in every particular."

Mr. Vanborough's swarthy complexion slowly turned pale. He cast one furtive glance at Mr. Kendrew, and turned away again.



"Well," he said to the lawyer, "now for your opinion! What is the law?"

"The law," answered Mr. Delamayn, "is beyond all doubt or dispute. Your marriage with Miss Anne Silvester is no marriage at all."

Mr. Kendrew started to his feet.

"What do you mean?" he asked, sternly.

The rising solicitor lifted his eyebrows in polite surprise. If Mr. Kendrew wanted information, why should Mr. Kendrew ask for it in that way? "Do you wish me to go into the law of the case?" he inquired.

"I do."

Mr. Delamayn stated the law, as that law still stands—to the disgrace of the English Legislature and the English Nation.

"By the Irish Statute of George the Second," he said, "every marriage celebrated by a Popish priest between two Protestants, or between a Papist and any person who has been a Protestant within twelve months before the marriage, is declared null and void. And by two other Acts of the same reign such a celebration of marriage is made a felony on the part of the priest. The clergy in Ireland of other religious denominations have been relieved from this law. But it still remains in force so far as the Roman Catholic priesthood is concerned."

"Is such a state of things possible in the age we live in!" exclaimed Mr. Kendrew.

Mr. Delamayn smiled. He had outgrown the customary illusions as to the age we live in.

"There are other instances in which the Irish

marriage-law presents some curious anomalies of its own," he went on. "It is felony, as I have just told you, for a Roman Catholic priest to celebrate a marriage which may be lawfully celebrated by a parochial clergyman, a Presbyterian minister, and a Non-conformist minister. It is also felony (by another law) on the part of a parochial clergyman to celebrate a marriage that may be lawfully celebrated by a Roman Catholic priest. And it is again felony (by yet another law) for a Presbyterian minister and a Non-conformist minister to celebrate a marriage which may be lawfully celebrated by a clergyman of the Established Church. An odd state of things. Foreigners might possibly think it a scandalous state of things. In this country we don't appear to mind it. Returning to the present case, the results stand thus: Mr. Vanborough is a single man; Mrs. Vanborough is a single woman; their child is illegitimate, and the priest, Ambrose Redman, is liable to be tried, and punished, as a felon, for marrying them."

"An infamous law!" said Mr. Kendrew.

"It *is* the law," returned Mr. Delamayn, as a sufficient answer to him.

Thus far not a word had escaped the master of the house. He sat with his lips fast closed and his eyes riveted on the table, thinking.

Mr. Kendrew turned to him, and broke the silence.

"Am I to understand," he asked, "that the advice you wanted from me related to *this*?"

"Yes."

"You mean to tell me that, foreseeing the present interview and the result to which it might lead, you felt any doubt as to the course you were bound to take? Am I really to understand that you hesitate to set this dreadful mistake right, and to make the woman who is your wife in the sight of Heaven your wife in the sight of the law?"

"If you choose to put it in that light," said Mr. Vanborough; "if you won't consider—"

"I want a plain answer to my question—'yes or no.'"

"Let me speak, will you! A man has a right to explain himself, I suppose?"

Mr. Kendrew stopped him by a gesture of disgust.

"I won't trouble you to explain yourself," he said. "I prefer to leave the house. You have given me a lesson, sir, which I shall not forget. I find that one man may have known another from the days when they were both boys, and may have seen nothing but the false surface of him in all that time. I am ashamed of having ever been your friend. You are a stranger to me from this moment."

With those words he left the room.

"That is a curiously hot-headed man," remarked Mr. Delamayn. "If you will allow me, I think I'll change my mind. I'll have a glass of wine."

Mr. Vanborough rose to his feet without replying, and took a turn in the room impatiently. Scoundrel as he was—in intention, if not yet in

act—the loss of the oldest friend he had in the world staggered him for the moment.

“This is an awkward business, Delamayn,” he said. “What would you advise me to do?”

Mr. Delamayn shook his head, and sipped his claret.

“I decline to advise you,” he answered. “I take no responsibility, beyond the responsibility of stating the law as it stands, in your case.”

Mr. Vanborough sat down again at the table, to consider the alternative of asserting or not asserting his freedom from the marriage tie. He had not had much time thus far for turning the matter over in his mind. But for his residence on the Continent the question of the flaw in his marriage might no doubt have been raised long since. As things were, the question had only taken its rise in a chance conversation with Mr. Delamayn in the summer of that year.

For some minutes the lawyer sat silent, sipping his wine, and the husband sat silent, thinking his own thoughts. The first change that came over the scene was produced by the appearance of a servant in the dining-room.

Mr. Vanborough looked up at the man with a sudden outbreak of anger.

“What do you want here?”

The man was a well-bred English servant. In other words, a human machine, doing its duty impenetrably when it was once wound up. He had his words to speak, and he spoke them.

“There is a lady at the door, sir, who wishes to see the house.”

"The house is not to be seen at this time of the evening."

The machine had a message to deliver, and delivered it.

"The lady desired me to present her apologies, sir. I was to tell you she was much pressed for time. This was the last house on the house agent's list, and her coachman is stupid about finding his way in strange places."

"Hold your tongue, and tell the lady to go to the devil!"

Mr. Delamayn interfered—partly in the interests of his client, partly in the interests of propriety.

"You attach some importance, I think, to letting this house as soon as possible?" he said.

"Of course I do!"

"Is it wise—on account of a momentary annoyance—to lose an opportunity of laying your hand on a tenant?"

"Wise or not, it's an infernal nuisance to be disturbed by a stranger."

"Just as you please. I don't wish to interfere. I only wish to say—in case you are thinking of my convenience as your guest—that it will be no nuisance to *me*."

The servant impenetrably waited. Mr. Vanborough impatiently gave way.

"Very well. Let her in. Mind, if she comes here, she's only to look into the room and go out again. If she wants to ask questions, she must go to the agent."

Mr. Delamayn interfered once more, in the interests, this time, of the lady of the house.

"Might it not be desirable," he suggested, "to consult Mrs. Vanborough before you quite decide?"

"Where's your mistress?"

"In the garden, or the paddock, sir—I am not sure which."

"We can't send all over the grounds in search of her. Tell the house-maid, and show the lady in."

The servant withdrew. Mr. Delamayn helped himself to a second glass of wine.

"Excellent claret," he said. "Do you get it direct from Bordeaux?"

There was no answer. Mr. Vanborough had returned to the contemplation of the alternative between freeing himself or not freeing himself from the marriage tie. One of his elbows was on the table; he bit fiercely at his finger-nails. He muttered between his teeth, "What am I to do?"

A sound of rustling silk made itself gently audible in the passage outside. The door opened, and the lady who had come to see the house appeared in the dining-room.

#### IV.

She was tall and elegant; beautifully dressed, in the happiest combination of simplicity and splendor. A light summer veil hung over her face. She lifted it, and made her apologies for



disturbing the gentlemen over their wine, with the unaffected ease and grace of a highly-bred woman.

“Pray accept my excuses for this intrusion. I am ashamed to disturb you. One look at the room will be quite enough.”

Thus far she had addressed Mr. Delamayn, who happened to be nearest to her. Looking round the room, her eye fell on Mr. Vanborough. She started, with a loud exclamation of astonishment. “*You!*” she said. “Good heavens! who would have thought of meeting *you* here?”

Mr. Vanborough, on his side, stood petrified.

“Lady Jane!” he exclaimed. “Is it possible?”

He barely looked at her while she spoke. His eyes wandered guiltily toward the window which led into the garden. The situation was a terrible one—equally terrible if his wife discovered Lady Jane, or if Lady Jane discovered his wife. For the moment nobody was visible on the lawn. There was time, if the chance only offered—there was time for him to get the visitor out of the house. The visitor, innocent of all knowledge of the truth, gayly offered him her hand.

“I believe in mesmerism for the first time,” she said. “This is an instance of magnetic sympathy, Mr. Vanborough. An invalid friend of mine wants a furnished house at Hampstead. I undertake to find one for her, and the day *I* select to make the discovery is the day *you* select for dining with a friend. A last house at Hampstead is left on my list—and in that house I meet you. Astonishing!” She turned to Mr.

Delamayn. "I presume I am addressing the owner of the house?" Before a word could be said by either of the gentlemen she noticed the garden. "What pretty grounds! Do I see a lady in the garden? I hope I have not driven her away?" She looked round, and appealed to Mr. Vanborough. "Your friend's wife?" she asked, and, on this occasion, waited for a reply.

In Mr. Vanborough's situation what reply was possible?

Mrs. Vanborough was not only visible—but audible—in the garden; giving her orders to one of the out-of-door servants with the tone and manner which proclaimed the mistress of the house. Suppose he said, "She is *not* my friend's wife?" Female curiosity would inevitably put the next question, "Who is she?" Suppose he invented an explanation? The explanation would take time, and time would give his wife an opportunity of discovering Lady Jane. Seeing all these considerations in one breathless moment, Mr. Vanborough took the shortest and the boldest way out of the difficulty. He answered silently by an affirmative inclination of the head, which dexterously turned Mrs. Vanborough into Mrs. Delamayn, without allowing Mr. Delamayn the opportunity of hearing it.

But the lawyer's eye was habitually watchful, and the lawyer saw him.

Mastering in a moment his first natural astonishment at the liberty taken with him, Mr. Delamayn drew the inevitable conclusion that there was something wrong, and that there was an at-

tempt (not to be permitted for a moment) to mix him up in it. He advanced, resolute to contradict his client, to his client's own face.

The voluble Lady Jane interrupted him before he could open his lips.

"Might I ask one question? Is the aspect south? Of course it is! I ought to see by the sun that the aspect is south! These and the other two are, I suppose, the only rooms on the ground-floor? And is it quiet? Of course it's quiet? A charming house. Far more likely to suit my friend than any I have seen yet. Will you give me the refusal of it till to-morrow?"

There she stopped for breath, and gave Mr. Delamayn his first opportunity of speaking to her.

"I beg your ladyship's pardon," he began. "I really can't—"

Mr. Vanborough—passing close behind him, and whispering as he passed—stopped the lawyer before he could say a word more.

"For God's sake, don't contradict me! My wife is coming this way!"

At the same moment (still supposing that Mr. Delamayn was the master of the house) Lady Jane returned to the charge.

"You appear to feel some hesitation," she said. "Do you want a reference?" She smiled satirically, and summoned her friend to her aid. "Mr. Vanborough!"

Mr. Vanborough, stealing step by step nearer to the window—intent, come what might of it, on keeping his wife out of the room—neither

heeded nor heard her. Lady Jane followed him and tapped him briskly on the shoulder with her parasol.

At that moment Mrs. Vanborough appeared on the garden side of the window.

"Am I in the way?" she asked, addressing her husband, after one steady look at Lady Jane. "This lady appears to be an old friend of yours." There was a tone of sarcasm in that allusion to the parasol which might develop into a tone of jealousy at a moment's notice.

Lady Jane was not in the least disconcerted. She had her double privilege of familiarity with the men whom she liked—her privilege as a woman of high rank, and her privilege as a young widow. She bowed to Mrs. Vanborough, with all the highly-finished politeness of the order to which she belonged.

"The lady of the house, I presume?" she said, with a gracious smile.

Mrs. Vanborough returned the bow coldly—entered the room first—and then answered, "Yes."

Lady Jane turned to Mr. Vanborough.

"Present me!" she said, submitting resignedly to the formalities of the middle classes.

Mr. Vanborough obeyed, without looking at his wife, and without mentioning his wife's name.

"Lady Jane Parnell," he said, passing over the introduction as rapidly as possible. "Let me see you to your carriage," he added, offering his arm. "I will take care that you have

the refusal of the house. You may trust it all to me."

No! Lady Jane was accustomed to leave a favorable impression behind her wherever she went. It was a habit with her to be charming (in widely different ways) to both sexes. The social experience of the upper classes is, in England, an experience of universal welcome. Lady Jane declined to leave until she had thawed the icy reception of the lady of the house.

"I must repeat my apologies," she said to Mrs. Vanborough, "for coming at this inconvenient time. My intrusion appears to have sadly disturbed the two gentlemen. Mr. Vanborough looks as if he wished me a hundred miles away. And as for your husband—" She stopped and glanced toward Mr. Delamayn. "Pardon me for speaking in that familiar way. I have not the pleasure of knowing your husband's name."

In speechless amazement Mrs. Vanborough's eyes followed the direction of Lady Jane's eyes—and rested on the lawyer, personally a total stranger to her.

Mr. Delamayn, resolutely waiting his opportunity to speak, seized it once more—and held it this time.

"I beg your pardon," he said. "There is some misapprehension here, for which I am in no way responsible. I am *not* that lady's husband."

It was Lady Jane's turn to be astonished. She looked at the lawyer. Useless! Mr. Delamayn had set himself right—Mr. Delamayn declined

to interfere further. He silently took a chair at the other end of the room. Lady Jane addressed Mr. Vanborough.

"Whatever the mistake may be," she said, "you are responsible for it. You certainly told me this lady was your friend's wife."

"What!!!" cried Mrs. Vanborough—loudly, sternly, incredulously.

The inbred pride of the great lady began to appear behind the thin outer veil of politeness that covered it.

"I will speak louder if you wish it," she said. "Mr. Vanborough told me you were that gentleman's wife."

Mr. Vanborough whispered fiercely to his wife through his clinched teeth:

"The whole thing is a mistake. Go into the garden again!"

Mrs. Vanborough's indignation was suspended for the moment in dread, as she saw the passion and the terror struggling in her husband's face.

"How you look at me!" she said. "How you speak to me!"

He only repeated, "Go into the garden!"

Lady Jane began to perceive—what the lawyer had discovered some minutes previously—that there was something wrong in the villa at Hampstead. The lady of the house was a lady in an anomalous position of some kind. And as the house, to all appearance, belonged to Mr. Vanborough's friend, Mr. Vanborough's friend must (in spite of his recent disclaimer) be in some way responsible for it. Arriving, naturally enough,



at this erroneous conclusion, Lady Jane's eyes rested for an instant on Mrs. Vanborough with a finely contemptuous expression of inquiry which would have roused the spirit of the tamest woman in existence. The implied insult stung the wife's sensitive nature to the quick. She turned once more to her husband—this time without flinching.

"Who is that woman?" she asked.

Lady Jane was equal to the emergency. The manner in which she wrapped herself up in her own virtue, without the slightest pretension on the one hand, and without the slightest compromise on the other, was a sight to see.

"Mr. Vanborough," she said, "you offered to take me to my carriage just now. I begin to understand that I had better have accepted the offer at once. Give me your arm."

"Stop!" said Mrs. Vanborough, "your ladyship's looks are looks of contempt; your ladyship's words can bear but one interpretation. I am innocently involved in some vile deception which I don't understand. But this I do know—I won't submit to be insulted in my own house. After what you have just said, I forbid my husband to give you his arm."

Her husband!

Lady Jane looked at Mr. Vanborough—at Mr. Vanborough, whom she loved; whom she had honestly believed to be a single man; whom she had suspected, up to that moment, of nothing worse than of trying to screen the frailties of his friend. She dropped her highly-bred tone; she

lost her highly-bred manners. The sense of her injury (if this was true), the pang of her jealousy (if that woman *was* his wife), stripped the human nature in her bare of all disguises, raised the angry color in her cheeks, and struck the angry fire out of her eyes.

"If you can tell the truth, sir," she said, haughtily, "be so good as to tell it now. Have you been falsely presenting yourself to the world—falsely presenting yourself to *me*—in the character and with the aspirations of a single man? Is that lady your wife?"

"Do you hear her? do you see her?" cried Mrs. Vanborough, appealing to her husband, in her turn. She suddenly drew back from him, shuddering from head to foot. "He hesitates!" she said to herself, faintly. "Good God! he hesitates!"

Lady Jane sternly repeated her question.

"Is that lady your wife?"

He roused his scoundrel-courage, and said the fatal word:

"No!"

Mrs. Vanborough staggered back. She caught at the white curtains of the window to save herself from falling, and tore them. She looked at her husband, with the torn curtain clinched fast in her hand. She asked herself, "Am I mad? or is he?"

Lady Jane drew a deep breath of relief. He was not married! He was only a profligate single man. A profligate single man is shocking—but reclaimable. It is possible to blame him

severely, and to insist on his reformation in the most uncompromising terms. It is also possible to forgive him, and marry him. Lady Jane took the necessary position under the circumstances with perfect tact. She inflicted reproof in the present without excluding hope in the future.

"I have made a very painful discovery," she said, gravely, to Mr. Vanborough. "It rests with *you* to persuade me to forget it! Good-evening!"

She accompanied the last words by a farewell look which aroused Mrs. Vanborough to frenzy. She sprang forward and prevented Lady Jane from leaving the room.

"No!" she said. "You don't go yet!"

Mr. Vanborough came forward to interfere. His wife eyed him with a terrible look, and turned from him with a terrible contempt. "That man has lied!" she said. "In justice to myself, I insist on proving it!" She struck a bell on a table near her. The servant came in. "Fetch my writing-desk out of the next room." She waited—with her back turned on her husband, with her eyes fixed on Lady Jane. Defenseless and alone she stood on the wreck of her married life, superior to the husband's treachery, the lawyer's indifference, and her rival's contempt. At that dreadful moment her beauty shone out again with a gleam of its old glory. The grand woman, who in the old stage days had held thousands breathless over the mimic woes of the scene, stood there grander than ever, in her own woe, and held the three peo-

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ple who looked at her breathless till she spoke again.

The servant came in with the desk. She took out a paper and handed it to Lady Jane.

"I was a singer on the stage," she said, "when I was a single woman. The slander to which such women are exposed doubted my marriage. I provided myself with the paper in your hand. It speaks for itself. Even the highest society, madam, respects *that!*"

Lady Jane examined the paper. It was a marriage certificate. She turned deadly pale, and beckoned to Mr. Vanborough. "Are you deceiving me?" she asked.

Mr. Vanborough looked back into the far corner of the room, in which the lawyer sat, impenetrably waiting for events. "Oblige me by coming here for a moment," he said.

Mr. Delamayn rose and complied with the request. Mr. Vanborough addressed himself to Lady Jane.

"I beg to refer you to my man of business. *He* is not interested in deceiving you."

"Am I required simply to speak to the fact?" asked Mr. Delamayn. "I decline to do more."

"You are not wanted to do more."

Listening intently to that interchange of question and answer, Mrs. Vanborough advanced a step in silence. The high courage that had sustained her against outrage which had openly declared itself shrank under the sense of something coming which she had not foreseen. A

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nameless dread throbbed at her heart and crept among the roots of her hair.

Lady Jane handed the certificate to the lawyer.

"In two words, sir," she said, impatiently, "what is this?"

"In two words, madam," answered Mr. Delamayn; "waste paper."

"He is *not* married?"

"He is *not* married."

After a moment's hesitation Lady Jane looked round at Mrs. Vanborough, standing silent at her side—looked, and started back in terror.

"Take me away!" she cried, shrinking from the ghastly face that confronted her with the fixed stare of agony in the great, glittering eyes.

"Take me away! That woman will murder me!"

Mr. Vanborough gave her his arm and led her to the door. There was dead silence in the room as he did it. Step by step the wife's eyes followed them with the same dreadful stare, till the door closed and shut them out. The lawyer, left alone with the disowned and deserted woman, put the useless certificate silently on the table. She looked from him to the paper, and dropped, without a cry to warn him, without an effort to save herself, senseless at his feet.

He lifted her from the floor and placed her on the sofa, and waited to see if Mr. Vanborough would come back. Looking at the beautiful face—still beautiful, even in the swoon—he owned it was hard on her. Yes! in his own impenetrable way, the rising lawyer owned it was hard on her.

But the law justified it. There was no doubt in this case. The law justified it.

The trampling of horses and the grating of wheels sounded outside. Lady Jane's carriage was driving away. Would the husband come back? (See what a thing habit is! Even Mr. Delamayn still mechanically thought of him as the husband—in the face of the law! in the face of the facts!)

No. The minutes passed. And no sign of the husband coming back.

It was not wise to make a scandal in the house. It was not desirable (on his own sole responsibility) to let the servants see what had happened. Still, there she lay senseless. The cool evening air came in through the open window and lifted the light ribbons in her lace cap, lifted the little lock of hair that had broken loose and drooped over her neck. Still, there she lay—the wife who had loved him, the mother of his child—there she lay.

He stretched out his hand to ring the bell and summon help.

At the same moment the quiet of the summer evening was once more disturbed. He held his hand suspended over the bell. The noise outside came nearer. It was again the trampling of horses and the grating of wheels. Advancing—rapidly advancing—stopping at the house.

Was Lady Jane coming back?

Was the husband coming back?

There was a loud ring at the bell—a quick opening of the house-door—a rustling of a wo-



man's dress in the passage. The door of the room opened, and the woman appeared—alone. Not Lady Jane. A stranger—older, years older, than Lady Jane. A plain woman, perhaps, at other times. A woman almost beautiful, now, with the eager happiness that beamed in her face.

She saw the figure on the sofa. She ran to it with a cry—a cry of recognition and a cry of terror in one. She dropped on her knees—and laid that helpless head on her bosom, and kissed, with a sister's kisses, that cold, white cheek.

“Oh, my darling!” she said. “Is it thus we meet again?”

Yes! After all the years that had passed since the parting in the cabin of the ship, it was thus the two school-friends met again.

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## Part the Second.

### THE MARCH OF TIME.

#### V.

ADVANCING from time past to time present, the Prologue leaves the date last attained (the summer of eighteen hundred and fifty-five), and travels on through an interval of twelve years—

tells who lived, who died, who prospered, and who failed among the persons concerned in the tragedy at the Hampstead villa—and, this done, leaves the reader at the opening of *THE STORY*, in the spring of eighteen hundred and sixty-eight.

The record begins with a marriage—the marriage of Mr. Vanborough and Lady Jane Parnell.

In three months from the memorable day when his solicitor had informed him that he was a free man, Mr. Vanborough possessed the wife he desired, to grace the head of his table and to push his fortunes in the world—the Legislature of Great Britain being the humble servant of his treachery, and the respectable accomplice of his crime.

He entered Parliament. He gave (thanks to his wife) six of the grandest dinners and two of the most crowded balls of the season. He made a successful first speech in the House of Commons. He endowed a church in a poor neighborhood. He wrote an article which attracted attention in a quarterly review. He discovered, denounced, and remedied a crying abuse in the administration of a public charity. He received (thanks once more to his wife) a member of the Royal family among the visitors at his country house in the autumn recess. These were his triumphs, and this his rate of progress on the way to the peerage, during the first year of his life as the husband of Lady Jane.

There was but one more favor that Fortune

could confer on her spoiled child—and Fortune bestowed it. There was a spot on Mr. Vanborough's past life as long as the woman lived whom he had disowned and deserted. At the end of the first year Death took her—and the spot was rubbed out.

She had met the merciless injury inflicted on her with a rare patience, with an admirable courage. It is due to Mr. Vanborough to admit that he broke her heart, with the strictest attention to propriety. He offered (through his lawyer) a handsome provision for her and for her child. It was rejected, without an instant's hesitation. She repudiated his money—she repudiated his name. By the name which she had borne in her maiden days—the name which she had made illustrious in her Art—the mother and daughter were known to all who cared to inquire after them when they had sunk in the world.

There was no false pride in the resolute attitude which she thus assumed after her husband had forsaken her. Mrs. Silvester (as she was now called) gratefully accepted for herself, and for Miss Silvester, the assistance of the dear old friend who had found her again in her affliction and who remained faithful to her to the end. They lived with Lady Lundie until the mother was strong enough to carry out the plan of life which she had arranged for the future, and to earn her bread as a teacher of singing. To all appearance she rallied and became herself again, in a few months' time. She was making her way; she was winning sympathy, confidence,

and respect everywhere—when she sank suddenly at the opening of her new life. Nobody could account for it. The doctors themselves were divided in opinion. Scientifically speaking, there was no reason why she should die. It was a mere figure of speech—in no degree satisfactory to any reasonable mind—to say, as Lady Lundie said, that she had got her death-blow on the day when her husband deserted her. The one thing certain was the fact—account for it as you might. In spite of science (which meant little), in spite of her own courage (which meant much), the woman dropped at her post and died.

In the latter part of her illness her mind gave way. The friend of her old school-days, sitting at the bedside, heard her talking as if she thought herself back again in the cabin of the ship. The poor soul found the tone, almost the look, that had been lost for so many years—the tone of the past time when the two girls had gone their different ways in the world. She said, “We will meet, darling, with all the old love between us,” just as she had said almost a lifetime since. Before the end her mind rallied. She surprised the doctor and the nurse by begging them gently to leave the room. When they had gone she looked at Lady Lundie, and woke, as it seemed, to consciousness from a dream.

“Blanche,” she said, “you will take care of my child?”

“She shall be *my* child, Anne, when you are gone.”

The dying woman paused, and thought for a little. A sudden trembling seized her.

"Keep it a secret!" she said. "I am afraid for my child."

"Afraid? After what I have promised you?"

She solemnly repeated the words, "I am afraid for my child."

"Why?"

"My Anne is my second self—isn't she?"

"Yes."

"She is as fond of your child as I was of you?"

"Yes."

"She is not called by her father's name—she is called by mine. She is Anne Silvester, as I was. Blanche! *Will she end like Me?*"

The question was put with the laboring breath, with the heavy accents which tell that death is near. It chilled the living woman who heard it to the marrow of her bones.

"Don't think that!" she cried, horrorstruck. "For God's sake, don't think that!"

The wildness began to appear again in Anne Silvester's eyes. She made feebly-impatient signs with her hands. Lady Lundie bent over her, and heard her whisper, "Lift me up."

She lay in her friend's arms; she looked up in her friend's face; she went back wildly to her fear for her child.

"Don't bring her up like Me! She must be a governess—she must get her bread. Don't let her act! don't let her sing! don't let her go on the stage!" She stopped—her voice suddenly recovered its sweetness of tone—she smiled

faintly—she said the old girlish words once more, in the old girlish way, “Vow it, Blanche!” Lady Lundie kissed her, and answered, as she had answered when they parted in the ship, “I vow it, Anne!”

The head sank, never to be lifted more. The last look of life flickered in the filmy eyes and went out. For a moment afterward her lips moved. Lady Lundie put her ear close to them, and heard the dreadful question reiterated, in the same dreadful words: “She is Anne Silvester—as I was. *Will she end like Me?*”

## VI.

Five years passed—and the lives of the three men who had sat at the dinner-table in the Hampstead villa began, in their altered aspects, to reveal the progress of time and change.

Mr. Kendrew; Mr. Delamayn; Mr. Vanborough. Let the order in which they are here named be the order in which their lives are reviewed, as seen once more after a lapse of five years.

How the husband’s friend marked his sense of the husband’s treachery has been told already. How he felt the death of the deserted wife is still left to tell. Report, which sees the inmost hearts of men, and delights in turning them outward to the public view, had always declared that Mr. Kendrew’s life had its secret, and that the secret was a hopeless passion for the beautiful woman who had married his friend. Not a hint ever dropped to any living soul, not a word ever spo-



ken to the woman herself, could be produced in proof of the assertion while the woman lived. When she died, Report started up again more confidently than ever, and appealed to the man's own conduct as proof against the man himself.

He attended the funeral—though he was no relation. He took a few blades of grass from the turf with which they covered her grave—when he thought that nobody was looking at him. He disappeared from his club. He traveled. He came back. He admitted that he was weary of England. He applied for, and obtained, an appointment in one of the colonies. To what conclusion did all this point? Was it not plain that his usual course of life had lost its attraction for him, when the object of his infatuation had ceased to exist? It might have been so—guesses less likely have been made at the truth, and have hit the mark. It is, at any rate, certain that he left England, never to return again. Another man lost, Report said. Add to that, a man in ten thousand—and, for once, Report might claim to be right.

Mr. Delamayn comes next.

The rising solicitor was struck off the roll, at his own request—and entered himself as a student at one of the Inns of Court. For three years nothing was known of him but that he was reading hard and keeping his terms: He was called to the Bar. His late partners in the firm knew they could trust him, and put business into his hands. In two years he made himself a position in Court. At the end of the two years

he made himself a position *out* of Court. He appeared as "Junior," in "a famous case," in which the honor of a great family, and the title to a great estate were concerned. His "Senior" fell ill on the eve of the trial. He conducted the case for the defendant and won it. The defendant said, "What can I do for you?" Mr. Delamayn answered, "Put me into Parliament." Being a landed gentleman, the defendant had only to issue the necessary orders—and behold, Mr. Delamayn was in Parliament!

In the House of Commons the new member and Mr. Vanborough met again.

They sat on the same bench, and sided with the same party. Mr. Delamayn noticed that Mr. Vanborough was looking old and worn and gray. He put a few questions to a well-informed person. The well-informed person shook his head. Mr. Vanborough was rich; Mr. Vanborough was well-connected (through his wife); Mr. Vanborough was a sound man in every sense of the word; *but*—nobody liked him. He had done very well the first year, and there it had ended. He was undeniably clever, but he produced a disagreeable impression in the House. He gave splendid entertainments, but he wasn't popular in society. His party respected him, but when they had anything to give they passed him over. He had a temper of his own, if the truth must be told; and with nothing against him—on the contrary, with everything in his favor—he didn't make friends. A soured man. At home and abroad, a soured man.

## VII.

Five years more passed, dating from the day when the deserted wife was laid in her grave. It was now the year eighteen hundred and sixty-six.

On a certain day in that year two special items of news appeared in the papers—the news of an elevation to the peerage, and the news of a suicide.

Getting on well at the Bar, Mr. Delamayn got on better still in Parliament. He became one of the prominent men in the House. Spoke clearly, sensibly, and modestly, and was never too long. Held the House, where men of higher abilities “bored” it. The chiefs of his party said openly, “We must do something for Delamayn.” The opportunity offered, and the chiefs kept their word. Their Solicitor-General was advanced a step, and they put Delamayn in his place. There was an outcry on the part of the older members of the Bar. The Ministry answered, “We want a man who is listened to in the House, and we have got him.” The papers supported the new nomination. A great debate came off, and the new Solicitor-General justified the Ministry and the papers. His enemies said, derisively, “He will be Lord Chancellor in a year or two!” His friends made genial jokes in his domestic circle, which pointed to the same conclusion. They warned his two sons, Julius and Geoffrey (then at college), to be careful what acquaintances they

made, as they might find themselves the sons of a lord at a moment's notice. It really began to look like something of the sort. Always rising, Mr. Delamayn rose next to be Attorney-General. About the same time—so true it is that “nothing succeeds like success”—a childless relative died and left him a fortune. In the summer of 'sixty-six a Chief Judgeship fell vacant. The Ministry had made a previous appointment which had been universally unpopular. They saw their way to supplying the place of their Attorney-General, and they offered the judicial appointment to Mr. Delamayn. He preferred remaining in the House of Commons, and refused to accept it. The Ministry declined to take No for an answer. They whispered, confidentially, “Will you take it with a peerage?” Mr. Delamayn consulted his wife, and took it with a peerage. The *London Gazette* announced him to the world as Baron Holchester of Holchester. And the friends of the family rubbed their hands and said, “What did we tell you? Here are our two young friends, Julius and Geoffrey, the sons of a lord!”

And where was Mr. Vanborough all this time? Exactly where we left him, five years since.

He was as rich, or richer, than ever. He was as well-connected as ever. He was as ambitious as ever. But there it ended. He stood still in the House; he stood still in society; nobody liked him; he made no friends. It was all the old story over again, with this difference, that the sour man was sourer; the gray head grayer;

and the irritable temper more unendurable than ever. His wife had her rooms in the house and he had his, and the confidential servants took care that they never met on the stairs. They had no children. They only saw each other at their grand dinners and balls. People ate at their table, and danced on their floor, and compared notes afterward, and said how dull it was. Step by step the man who had once been Mr. Vanborough's lawyer rose, till the peerage received him, and he could rise no longer; while Mr. Vanborough, on the lower round of the ladder, looked up and noted it, with no more chance (rich as he was and well-connected as he was) of climbing to the House of Lords than your chance or mine.

The man's career was ended; and on the day when the nomination of the new peer was announced, the man ended with it.

He laid the newspaper aside without making any remark, and went out. His carriage set him down, where the green fields still remain, on the northwest of London, near the footpath which leads to Hampstead. He walked alone to the villa where he had once lived with the woman whom he had so cruelly wronged. New houses had risen round it, part of the old garden had been sold and built on. After a moment's hesitation, he went to the gate and rang the bell. He gave the servant his card. The servant's master knew the name as the name of a man of great wealth, and of a Member of Parliament. He asked politely to what fortunate circum-

stance he owed the honor of that visit. Mr. Vanborough answered briefly and simply, "I once lived here; I have associations with the place with which it is not necessary for me to trouble you. Will you excuse what must seem to you a very strange request? I should like to see the dining-room again, if there is no objection, and if I am disturbing nobody."

The "strange requests" of rich men are of the nature of "privileged communications," for this excellent reason, that they are sure not to be requests for money. Mr. Vanborough was shown into the dining-room. The master of the house, secretly wondering, watched him.

He walked straight to a certain spot on the carpet, not far from the window that led into the garden, and nearly opposite the door. On that spot he stood silently, with his head on his breast—thinking. Was it *there* he had seen her for the last time, on the day when he left the room forever? Yes; it was there. After a minute or so he roused himself, but in a dreamy, absent manner. He said it was a pretty place, and expressed his thanks, and looked back before the door closed, and then went his way again. His carriage picked him up where it had set him down. He drove to the residence of the new Lord Holchester, and left a card for him. Then he went home. Arrived at his house, his secretary reminded him that he had an appointment in ten minutes' time. He thanked the secretary in the same dreamy, absent manner in which he had thanked the owner of the villa,





THEY BROKE OPEN THE DOOR, AND SAW HIM LYING ON THE SOFA.



and went into his dressing-room. The person with whom he had made the appointment came, and the secretary sent the valet upstairs to knock at the door. There was no answer. On trying the lock, it proved to be turned inside. They broke open the door, and saw him lying on the sofa. They went close to look—and found him dead by his own hand.

### VIII.

Drawing fast to its close, the Prologue reverts to the two girls—and tells, in a few words, how the years passed with Anne and Blanche.

Lady Lundie more than redeemed the solemn pledge that she had given to her friend. Preserved from every temptation which might lure her into a longing to follow her mother's career; trained for a teacher's life, with all the arts and all the advantages that money could procure, Anne's first and only essays as a governess were made, under Lady Lundie's own roof, on Lady Lundie's own child. The difference in the ages of the girls—seven years—the love between them, which seemed, as time went on, to grow with their growth, favored the trial of the experiment. In the double relation of teacher and friend to little Blanche, the girlhood of Anne Silvester the youngest passed safely, happily, uneventfully, in the modest sanctuary of home. Who could imagine a contrast more complete than the contrast between her early life and her mother's? Who could see anything but a death-bed delusion in the terrible question which had

tortured the mother's last moments: "Will she end like Me?"

But two events of importance occurred in the quiet family circle during the lapse of years which is now under review. In eighteen hundred and fifty-eight the household was enlivened by the arrival of Sir Thomas Lundie. In eighteen hundred and sixty-five the household was broken up by the return of Sir Thomas to India, accompanied by his wife.

Lady Lundie's health had been failing for some time previously. The medical men, consulted on the case, agreed that a sea-voyage was the one change needful to restore their patient's wasted strength—exactly at the time, as it happened, when Sir Thomas was due again in India. For his wife's sake, he agreed to defer his return, by taking the sea-voyage with her. The one difficulty to get over was the difficulty of leaving Blanche and Anne behind in England.

Appealed to on this point, the doctors had declared that at Blanche's critical time of life they could not sanction her going to India with her mother. At the same time, near and dear relatives came forward, who were ready and anxious to give Blanche and her governess a home—Sir Thomas, on his side, engaging to bring his wife back in a year and a half, or, at most, in two years' time. Assailed in all directions, Lady Lundie's natural unwillingness to leave the girls was overruled. She consented to the parting—with a mind secretly depressed, and secretly doubtful of the future.

At the last moment she drew Anne Silvester on one side, out of hearing of the rest. Anne was then a young woman of twenty-two, and Blanche a girl of fifteen.

"My dear," she said, simply, "I must tell *you* what I cannot tell Sir Thomas, and what I am afraid to tell Blanche. I am going away, with a mind that misgives me. I am persuaded I shall not live to return to England; and, when I am dead, I believe my husband will marry again. Years ago your mother was uneasy, on her death-bed, about *your* future. I am uneasy, now, about Blanche's future. I promised my dear dead friend that you should be like my own child to me—and it quieted her mind. Quiet *my* mind, Anne, before I go. Whatever happens in years to come—promise me to be always, what you are now, a sister to Blanche."

She held out her hand for the last time. With a full heart Anne Silvester kissed it, and gave the promise.

## IX.

In two months from that time one of the forebodings which had weighed on Lady Lundie's mind was fulfilled. She died on the voyage, and was buried at sea.

In a year more the second misgiving was confirmed. Sir Thomas Lundie married again. He brought his second wife to England toward the close of eighteen hundred and sixty-six.

Time, in the new household, promised to pass

as quietly as in the old. Sir Thomas remembered and respected the trust which his first wife had placed in Anne. The second Lady Lundie, wisely guiding her conduct in this matter by the conduct of her husband, left things as she found them in the new house. At the opening of eighteen hundred and sixty-seven the relations between Anne and Blanche were relations of sisterly sympathy and sisterly love. The prospect in the future was as fair as a prospect could be.

At this date, of the persons concerned in the tragedy of twelve years since at the Hampstead villa, three were dead; and one was self-exiled in a foreign land. There now remained living Anne and Blanche, who had been children at the time; and the rising solicitor who had discovered the flaw in the Irish marriage—once Mr. Delamayn: now Lord Holchester.

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# THE STORY.

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## *FIRST SCENE.—THE SUMMER-HOUSE.*

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### CHAPTER THE FIRST.

#### THE OWLS.

IN the spring of the year eighteen hundred and sixty-eight there lived, in a certain county of North Britain, two venerable White Owls.

The Owls inhabited a decayed and deserted summer-house. The summer-house stood in grounds attached to a country seat in Perthshire, known by the name of Windygates.

The situation of Windygates had been skillfully chosen in that part of the county where the fertile lowlands first begin to merge into the mountain region beyond. The mansion-house was intelligently laid out, and luxuriously furnished. The stables offered a model for ventilation and space; and the gardens and grounds were fit for a prince.

Possessed of these advantages at starting, Windygates, nevertheless, went the road to ruin in due course of time. The curse of litigation fell on house and lands. For more than ten years an interminable lawsuit coiled itself closer

and closer round the place, sequestering it from human habitation, and even from human approach. The mansion was closed. The garden became a wilderness of weeds. The summer-house was choked up by creeping plants; and the appearance of the creepers was followed by the appearance of the birds of night.

For years the Owls lived undisturbed on the property which they had acquired by the oldest of all existing rights—the right of taking. Throughout the day they sat peaceful and solemn, with closed eyes, in the cool darkness shed round them by the ivy. With the twilight they roused themselves softly to the business of life. In sage and silent companionship of two, they went flying, noiseless, along the quiet lanes in search of a meal. At one time they would beat a field like a setter dog, and drop down in an instant on a mouse unaware of them. At another time—moving spectral over the black surface of the water—they would try the lake for a change, and catch a perch as they had caught the mouse. Their catholic digestions were equally tolerant of a rat or an insect. And there were moments, proud moments in their lives, when they were clever enough to snatch a small bird at roost off his perch. On those occasions the sense of superiority which the large bird feels everywhere over the small, warmed their cool blood, and set them screeching cheerfully in the stillness of the night.

So, for years, the Owls slept their happy sleep by day, and found their comfortable meal when

darkness fell. They had come, with the creepers, into possession of the summer-house. Consequently, the creepers were a part of the constitution of the summer-house. And consequently the Owls were the guardians of the Constitution. There are some human owls who reason as they did, and who are, in this respect—as also in respect of snatching smaller birds off their roosts—wonderfully like them.

The constitution of the summer-house had lasted until the spring of the year eighteen hundred and sixty-eight, when the unhallowed footsteps of innovation passed that way; and the venerable privileges of the Owls were assailed, for the first time, from the world outside.

Two featherless beings appeared, uninvited, at the door of the summer-house, surveyed the constitutional creepers, and said, “These must come down”—looked around at the horrid light of noonday, and said, “That must come in”—went away, thereupon, and were heard, in the distance, agreeing together, “To-morrow it shall be done.”

And the Owls said, “Have we honored the summer-house by occupying it all these years—and is the horrid light of noonday to be let in on us at last? My lords and gentlemen, the Constitution is destroyed!”

They passed a resolution to that effect, as is the manner of their kind. And then they shut their eyes again, and felt that they had done their duty.

The same night, on their way to the fields,

the summer-house, seen through three arched openings, the cool green prospect of a lawn led away, in the distance, to flower-beds and shrubberies, and, further still, disclosed, through a break in the trees, a grand stone house, which closed the view, with a fountain in front of it playing in the sun.

They were half of them laughing, they were all of them talking—the comfortable hum of the voices was at its loudest; the cheery pealing of the laughter was soaring to its highest notes—when one dominant voice, rising clear and shrill above all the rest, called imperatively for silence. The moment after, a young lady stepped into the vacant space in front of the summer-house, and surveyed the throng of guests as a general in command surveys a regiment under review.

She was young, she was pretty, she was plump, she was fair. She was not the least embarrassed by her prominent position. She was dressed in the height of the fashion. A hat, like a cheese-plate, was tilted over her forehead. A balloon of light brown hair soared, fully inflated, from the crown of her head. A cataract of beads poured over her bosom. A pair of cockchafers in enamel (frightfully like the living originals) hung at her ears. Her scanty skirts shone splendid with the blue of heaven. Her ankles twinkled in striped stockings. Her shoes were of the sort called “Watteau.” And her heels were of the height at which men shudder, and ask themselves (in contemplating an otherwise

lovable woman), "Can this charming person straighten her knees?"

The young lady thus presenting herself to the general view was Miss Blanche Lundie—once the little rosy Blanche whom the Prologue has introduced to the reader. Age, at the present time, eighteen. Position, excellent. Money, certain. Temper, quick. Disposition, variable. In a word, a child of the modern time—with the merits of the age we live in, and the failings of the age we live in—and a substance of sincerity and truth and feeling underlying it all.

"Now then, good people," cried Miss Blanche, "silence, if you please! We are going to choose sides at croquet. Business, business, business!"

Upon this, a second lady among the company assumed a position of prominence, and answered the young person who had just spoken with a look of mild reproof, and in a tone of benevolent protest.

The second lady was tall, and solid, and five-and-thirty. She presented to the general observation a cruel aquiline nose, an obstinate straight chin, magnificent dark hair and eyes, a serene splendor of fawn-colored apparel, and a lazy grace of movement which was attractive at first sight, but inexpressibly monotonous and wearisome on a longer acquaintance. This was Lady Lundie the Second, now the widow (after four months only of married life) of Sir Thomas Lundie, deceased. In other words, the step-mother of Blanche, and the enviable person who had taken the house and lands of Windygates.

"My dear," said Lady Lundie, "words have their meanings even on a young lady's lips. Do you call croquet business?"

"You don't call it pleasure, surely?" said a gravely ironical voice in the background of the summer-house.

The ranks of the visitors parted before the last speaker, and disclosed to view, in the midst of that modern assembly, a gentleman of the by-gone time.

The manner of this gentleman was distinguished by a pliant grace and courtesy unknown to the present generation. The attire of this gentleman was composed of a many-folded white cravat, a close-buttoned blue dress-coat, and nankeen trousers with gaiters to match, ridiculous to the present generation. The talk of this gentleman ran in an easy flow—revealing an independent habit of mind, and exhibiting a carefully polished capacity for satirical retort—dreaded and disliked by the present generation. Personally, he was little and wiry and slim—with a bright white head, and sparkling black eyes, and a wry twist of humor curling sharply at the corners of his lips. At his lower extremities, he exhibited the deformity which is popularly known as "a club-foot." But he carried his lameness, as he carried his years, gayly. He was socially celebrated for his ivory cane, with a snuff-box artfully let into the knob at the top—and he was socially dreaded for a hatred of modern institutions, which expressed itself in season and out of season, and which always



showed the same fatal knack of hitting smartly on the weakest place. Such was Sir Patrick Lundie; brother of the late baronet, Sir Thomas; and inheritor, at Sir Thomas's death, of the title and estates.

Miss Blanche—taking no notice of her step-mother's reproof, or of her uncle's commentary on it—pointed to a table on which croquet mallets and balls were laid ready, and recalled the attention of the company to the matter in hand.

"I head one side, ladies and gentlemen," she resumed; "and Lady Lundie heads the other. We choose our players turn and turn about. Mamma has the advantage of me in years. So mamma chooses first."

With a look at her step-daughter—which, being interpreted, meant, "I would send you back to the nursery, miss, if I could!"—Lady Lundie turned and ran her eye over her guests. She had evidently made up her mind, beforehand, what player to pick out first.

"I choose Miss Silvester," she said—with a special emphasis laid on the name.

At that there was another parting among the crowd. To us (who know her), it was Anne who now appeared. Strangers, who saw her for the first time, saw a lady in the prime of her life—a lady plainly dressed in unornamented white—who advanced slowly, and confronted the mistress of the house.

A certain proportion—and not a small one—of the men at the lawn-party had been brought there by friends who were privileged to introduce

them. The moment she appeared every one of those men suddenly became interested in the lady who had been chosen first.

"That's a very charming woman," whispered one of the strangers at the house to one of the friends of the house. "Who is she?"

The friend whispered back:

"Miss Lundie's governess—that's all."

The moment during which the question was put and answered was also the moment which brought Lady Lundie and Miss Silvester face to face, in the presence of the company.

The stranger at the house looked at the two women, and whispered again.

"Something wrong between the lady and the governess," he said.

The friend looked also, and answered, in one emphatic word:

"Evidently!"

There are certain women whose influence over men is an unfathomable mystery to observers of their own sex. The governess was one of those women. She had inherited the charm, but not the beauty, of her unhappy mother. Judge her by the standard set up in the illustrated gift-books and the print-shop windows—and the sentence must have inevitably followed, "She has not a single good feature in her face." There was nothing individually remarkable about Miss Silvester, seen in a state of repose. She was of the average height. She was as well made as most women. In hair and complexion, she was neither light nor dark, but provokingly neutral,

just between the two. Worse even than this, there were positive defects in her face, which it was impossible to deny. A nervous contraction at one corner of her mouth drew up the lips out of the symmetrically right line, when they moved. A nervous uncertainty in the eye on the same side narrowly escaped presenting the deformity of a "cast." And yet, with these indisputable drawbacks, here was one of those women—the formidable few—who have the hearts of men and the peace of families at their mercy. She moved—and there was some subtle charm, sir, in the movement, that made you look back, and suspend your conversation with your friend, and watch her silently while she walked. She sat by you and talked to you—and behold, a sensitive something passed into that little twist at the corner of the mouth, and into that nervous uncertainty in the soft gray eye, which turned defect into beauty—which enchained your senses—which made your nerves thrill if she touched you by accident, and set your heart beating if you looked at the same book with her, and felt her breath on your face. All this, let it be well understood, only happened if you were a man. If you saw her with the eyes of a woman, the results were of quite another kind. In that case, you merely turned to your nearest female friend, and said, with unaffected pity for the other sex, "*What can the men see in her!*"

The eyes of the lady of the house and the eyes of the governess met, with marked distrust on

either side. Few people could have failed to see, what the stranger and the friend had noticed alike—that there was something smoldering under the surface here. Miss Silvester spoke first.

“Thank you, Lady Lundie,” she said. “I would rather not play.”

Lady Lundie assumed an extreme surprise which passed the limits of good-breeding.

“Oh, indeed!” she rejoined, sharply. “Considering that we are all here for the purpose of playing, that seems rather remarkable. Is anything wrong, Miss Silvester?”

A flush appeared on the delicate paleness of Miss Silvester’s face. But she did her duty as a woman and a governess. She submitted, and so preserved appearances, for that time.

“Nothing is the matter,” she answered. “I am not very well this morning. But I will play if you wish it.”

“I do wish it,” answered Lady Lundie.

Miss Silvester turned aside toward one of the entrances into the summer-house. She waited for events, looking out over the lawn, with a visible inner disturbance, marked over the bosom by the rise and fall of her white dress.

It was Blanche’s turn to select the next player.

In some preliminary uncertainty as to her choice, she looked about among the guests, and caught the eye of a gentleman in the front ranks. He stood side by side with Sir Patrick—a striking representative of the school that is among us—as Sir Patrick was a striking representative of the school that has passed away.

The modern gentleman was young and florid, tall and strong. The parting of his curly Saxon locks began in the center of his forehead, traveled over the top of his head, and ended, rigidly central, at the ruddy nape of his neck. His features were as perfectly regular and as perfectly unintelligent as human features can be. His expression preserved an immovable composure wonderful to behold. The muscles of his brawny arms showed through the sleeves of his light summer coat. He was deep in the chest, thin in the flanks, firm on the legs—in two words, a magnificent human animal, wrought up to the highest pitch of physical development, from head to foot. This was Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn—commonly called “the honorable;” and meriting that distinction in more ways than one. He was honorable, in the first place, as being the son (second son) of that once-rising solicitor, who was now Lord Holchester. He was honorable, in the second place, as having won the highest popular distinction which the educational system of modern England can bestow—he had pulled the stroke-oar in a University boat-race. Add to this, that nobody had ever seen him read anything but a newspaper, and that nobody had ever known him to be backward in settling a bet—and the picture of this distinguished young Englishman will be, for the present, complete.

Blanche’s eye naturally rested on him. Blanche’s voice naturally picked him out as the first player on her side.

“I choose Mr. Delamayn,” she said.

As the name passed her lips the flush on Miss Silvester's face died away and a deadly paleness took its place. She made a movement to leave the summer-house—checked herself abruptly—and laid one hand on the back of a rustic seat at her side. A gentleman behind her, looking at the hand, saw it clinch itself so suddenly and so fiercely that the glove on it split. The gentleman made a mental memorandum, and registered Miss Silvester in his private books as “the devil's own temper.”

Meanwhile, Mr. Delamayn, by a strange coincidence, took exactly the same course which Miss Silvester had taken before him. He, too, attempted to withdraw from the coming game.

“Thanks very much,” he said. “Could you additionally honor me by choosing somebody else? It's not in my line.”

Fifty years ago such an answer as this, addressed to a lady, would have been considered inexcusably impertinent. The social code of the present time hailed it as something frankly amusing. The company laughed. Blanche lost her temper.

“Can't we interest you in anything but severe muscular exertion, Mr. Delamayn?” she asked, sharply. “Must you always be pulling in a boat-race, or flying over a high jump? If you had a mind, you would want to relax it. You have got muscles instead. Why not relax *them*?”

The shafts of Miss Lundie's bitter wit glided off Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn like water off a duck's back.



"Just as you please," he said, with stolid good-humor. "Don't be offended. I came here with ladies—and they wouldn't let me smoke. I miss my smoke. I thought I'd slip away a bit and have it. All right! I'll play."

"Oh! smoke by all means!" retorted Blanche. "I shall choose somebody else. I won't have you!"

The honorable young gentleman looked unaffectedly relieved. The petulant young lady turned her back on him and surveyed the guests at the other extremity of the summer-house.

"Who shall I choose?" she said to herself.

A dark young man—with a face burned gypsy-brown by the sun; with something in his look and manner suggestive of a roving life, and perhaps of a familiar acquaintance with the sea—advanced shyly, and said, in a whisper:

"Choose me!"

Blanche's face broke prettily into a charming smile. Judging from appearances, the dark young man had a place in her estimation peculiarly his own.

"You!" she said, coquettishly. "You are going to leave us in an hour's time!"

He ventured a step nearer. "I am coming back," he pleaded, "the day after to-morrow."

"You play very badly!"

"I might improve—if you would teach me."

"Might you? Then I *will* teach you!" She turned, bright and rosy, to her step-mother. "I choose Mr. Arnold Brinkworth," she said.

Here, again, there appeared to be something

in a name unknown to celebrity, which nevertheless produced its effect—not, this time, on Miss Silvester, but on Sir Patrick. He looked at Mr. Brinkworth with a sudden interest and curiosity. If the lady of the house had not claimed his attention at the moment he would evidently have spoken to the dark young man.

But it was Lady Lundie's turn to choose a second player on her side. Her brother-in-law was a person of some importance; and she had her own motives for ingratiating herself with the head of the family. She surprised the whole company by choosing Sir Patrick.

"Mamma!" cried Blanche. "What can you be thinking of? Sir Patrick won't play. Croquet wasn't discovered in his time."

Sir Patrick never allowed "his time" to be made the subject of disparaging remarks by the younger generation without paying the younger generation back in its own coin.

"In *my* time, my dear," he said to his niece, "people were expected to bring some agreeable quality with them to social meetings of this sort. In *your* time you have dispensed with all that. Here," remarked the old gentleman, taking up a croquet mallet from the table near him, "is one of the qualifications for success in modern society. And here," he added, taking up a ball, "is another. Very good. Live and learn. I'll play! I'll play!"

Lady Lundie (born impervious to all sense of irony) smiled graciously.

"I knew Sir Patrick would play," she said, "to please *me*."

Sir Patrick bowed with satirical politeness.

"Lady Lundie," he answered, "you read me like a book." To the astonishment of all persons present under forty he emphasized those words by laying his hand on his heart, and quoting poetry. "I may say with Dryden," added the gallant old gentleman:

"'Old as I am, for ladies' love unfit,  
The power of beauty I remember yet.'"

Lady Lundie looked unaffectedly shocked. Mr. Delamayn went a step further. He interfered on the spot—with the air of a man who feels himself imperatively called upon to perform a public duty.

"Dryden never said that," he remarked, "I'll answer for it."

Sir Patrick wheeled round with the help of his ivory cane, and looked Mr. Delamayn hard in the face.

"Do you know Dryden, sir, better than I do?" he asked.

The Honorable Geoffrey answered, modestly, "I should say I did. I have rowed three races with him, and we trained together."

Sir Patrick looked round him with a sour smile of triumph.

"Then let me tell you, sir," he said, "that you trained with a man who died nearly two hundred years ago."

Mr. Delamayn appealed, in genuine bewilderment, to the company generally.

"What does this old gentleman mean?" he asked. "I am speaking of Tom Dryden, of Corpus. Everybody in the University knows *him*."

"I am speaking," echoed Sir Patrick, "of John Dryden the Poet. Apparently, everybody in the University does *not* know *him*!"

Mr. Delamayn answered, with a cordial earnestness very pleasant to see:

"Give you my word of honor, I never heard of him before in my life! Don't be angry, sir. *I'm* not offended with *you*." He smiled, and took out his briar-wood pipe. "Got a light?" he asked, in the friendliest possible manner.

Sir Patrick answered, with a total absence of cordiality:

. "I don't smoke, sir."

Mr. Delamayn looked at him, without taking the slightest offense:

"You don't smoke!" he repeated. "I wonder how you get through your spare time?"

Sir Patrick closed the conversation:

"Sir," he said, with a low bow, "*you may* wonder."

While this little skirmish was proceeding Lady Lundie and her step-daughter had organized the game; and the company, players and spectators, were beginning to move toward the lawn. Sir Patrick stopped his niece on her way out, with the dark young man in close attendance on her.

"Leave Mr. Brinkworth with me," he said. "I want to speak to him."

Blanche issued her orders immediately. Mr. Brinkworth was sentenced to stay with Sir Patrick until she wanted him for the game. Mr. Brinkworth wondered, and obeyed.

During the exercise of this act of authority a circumstance occurred at the other end of the summer-house. Taking advantage of the confusion caused by the general movement to the lawn, Miss Silvester suddenly placed herself close to Mr. Delamayn.

"In ten minutes," she whispered, "the summer-house will be empty. Meet me here."

The Honorable Geoffrey started, and looked furtively at the visitors about him.

"Do you think it's safe?" he whispered back.

The governess's sensitive lips trembled, with fear or with anger, it was hard to say which.

"I insist on it!" she answered, and left him.

Mr. Delamayn knitted his handsome eyebrows as he looked after her, and then left the summer-house in his turn. The rose-garden at the back of the building was solitary for the moment. He took out his pipe and hid himself among the roses. The smoke came from his mouth in hot and hasty puffs. He was usually the gentlest of masters—to his pipe. When he hurried that confidential servant, it was a sure sign of disturbance in the inner man.

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## CHAPTER THE THIRD.

## THE DISCOVERIES.

BUT two persons were now left in the summer-house—Arnold Brinkworth and Sir Patrick Lundie.

“Mr. Brinkworth,” said the old gentleman, “I have had no opportunity of speaking to you before this; and (as I hear that you are to leave us to-day) I may find no opportunity at a later time. I want to introduce myself. Your father was one of my dearest friends—let me make a friend of your father’s son.”

He held out his hand and mentioned his name. Arnold recognized it directly. “Oh, Sir Patrick!” he said, warmly, “if my poor father had only taken your advice—”

“He would have thought twice before he gambled away his fortune on the turf; and he might have been alive here among us, instead of dying an exile in a foreign land,” said Sir Patrick, finishing the sentence which the other had begun. “No more of that! Let’s talk of something else. Lady Lundie wrote to me about you the other day. She told me your aunt was dead, and had left you heir to her property in Scotland. Is that true?—It is?—I congratulate you with all my heart. Why are you visiting here, instead of looking after your house and lands? Oh! it’s only three-and-twenty miles



from this; and you're going to look after it to-day, by the next train? Quite right. And—what? what?—coming back again the day after to-morrow? Why should you come back? Some special attraction here, I suppose? I hope it's the right sort of attraction. You're very young—you're exposed to all sorts of temptations. Have you got a solid foundation of good sense at the bottom of you? It is not inherited from your poor father, if you have. You must have been a mere boy when he ruined his children's prospects. How have you lived from that time to this? What were you doing when your aunt's will made an idle man of you for life?"

The question was a searching one. Arnold answered it, without the slightest hesitation; speaking with an unaffected modesty and simplicity which at once won Sir Patrick's heart.

"I was a boy at Eton, sir," he said, "when my father's losses ruined him. I had to leave school, and get my own living; and I have got it, in a roughish way, from that time to this. In plain English, I have followed the sea—in the merchant-service."

"In plainer English still, you met adversity like a brave lad, and you have fairly earned the good luck that has fallen to you," rejoined Sir Patrick. "Give me your hand—I have taken a liking to you. You're not like the other young fellows of the present time. I shall call you 'Arnold.' You mustn't return the compliment, and call me 'Patrick,' mind—I'm too old to be treated in that way. Well, and how do you get

on here? What sort of a woman is my sister-in-law? and what sort of a house is this?"

Arnold burst out laughing.

"Those are extraordinary questions for you to put to me," he said. "You talk, sir, as if you were a stranger here."

Sir Patrick touched a spring in the knob of his ivory cane. A little gold lid flew up, and disclosed the snuff-box hidden inside. He took a pinch, and chuckled satirically over some passing thought, which he did not think it necessary to communicate to his young friend.

"I talk as if I was a stranger here, do I?" he resumed. "That's exactly what I am. Lady Lundie and I correspond on excellent terms; but we run in different grooves, and we see each other as seldom as possible. My story," continued the pleasant old man, with a charming frankness which leveled all differences of age and rank between Arnold and himself, "is not entirely unlike yours; though I *am* old enough to be your grandfather. I was getting my living in *my* way (as a crusty old Scotch lawyer), when my brother married again. His death, without leaving a son by either of his wives, gave *me* a lift in the world, like you. Here I am (to my own sincere regret) the present baronet. Yes, to my sincere regret! All sorts of responsibilities which I never bargained for are thrust on my shoulders. I am the head of the family; I am my niece's guardian; I am compelled to appear at this lawn-party—and (between ourselves) I am as completely out of my

element as a man can be. Not a single familiar face meets *me* among all these fine people. Do *you* know anybody here?"

"I have one friend at Windygates," said Arnold. "He came here this morning, like you. Geoffrey Delamayn."

As he made the reply, Miss Silvester appeared at the entrance to the summer-house. A shadow of annoyance passed over her face when she saw that the place was occupied. She vanished, unnoticed, and glided back to the game.

Sir Patrick looked at the son of his old friend, with every appearance of being disappointed in the young man for the first time. "Your choice of a friend rather surprises me," he said.

Arnold artlessly accepted the words as an appeal to him for information.

"I beg your pardon, sir—there's nothing surprising in it," he returned. "We were school-fellows at Eton, in the old times. And I have met Geoffrey since, when he was yachting, and when I was with my ship. Geoffrey saved my life, Sir Patrick," he added, his voice rising, and his eyes brightening with honest admiration of his friend. "But for him, I should have been drowned in a boat accident. Isn't *that* a good reason for his being a friend of mine?"

"It depends entirely on the value you set on your life," said Sir Patrick.

"The value I set on my life?" repeated Arnold. "I set a high value on it, of course!"

"In that case, Mr. Delamayn has laid you under an obligation."

“Which I can never repay!”

“Which you will repay one of these days, with interest—if I know anything of human nature,” answered Sir Patrick.

He said the words with the emphasis of strong conviction. They were barely spoken when Mr. Delamayn appeared (exactly as Miss Silvester had appeared) at the entrance to the summer-house. He, too, vanished, unnoticed—like Miss Silvester again. But here the parallel stopped. The Honorable Geoffrey’s expression, on discovering the place to be occupied, was, unmistakably, an expression of relief.

Arnold drew the right inference, this time, from Sir Patrick’s language and Sir Patrick’s tones. He eagerly took up the defense of his friend.

“You said that rather bitterly, sir,” he remarked. “What has Geoffrey done to offend you?”

“He presumes to exist—that’s what he has done,” retorted Sir Patrick. “Don’t stare! I am speaking generally. Your friend is the model young Briton of the present time. I don’t like the model young Briton. I don’t see the sense of crowing over him as a superb national production, because he is big and strong, and drinks beer with impunity, and takes a cold shower-bath all the year round. There is far too much glorification in England, just now, of the mere physical qualities which an Englishman shares with the savage and the brute. And the ill results are beginning to show themselves

already! We are readier than we ever were to practice all that is rough in our national customs, and to excuse all that is violent and brutish in our national acts. Read the popular books—attend the popular amusements; and you will find at the bottom of them all a lessening regard for the gentler graces of civilized life, and a growing admiration for the virtues of the aboriginal Britons!”

Arnold listened in blank amazement. He had been the innocent means of relieving Sir Patrick's mind of an accumulation of social protest, unprovided with an issue for some time past. “How hot you are over it, sir!” he exclaimed, in irrepressible astonishment.

Sir Patrick instantly recovered himself. The genuine wonder expressed in the young man's face was irresistible.

“Almost as hot,” he said, “as if I was cheering at a boat-race, or wrangling over a betting-book—eh? Ah, we were so easily heated when I was a young man! Let's change the subject. I know nothing to the prejudice of your friend, Mr. Delamayn. It's the cant of the day,” cried Sir Patrick, relapsing again, “to take these physically-wholesome men for granted as being morally-wholesome men into the bargain. Time will show whether the cant of the day is right. So you are actually coming back to Lady Lundy's after a mere flying visit to your own property? I repeat, that it is a most extraordinary proceeding on the part of a landed gentleman like you. What's the attraction here—eh?”

Before Arnold could reply Blanche called to him from the lawn. His color rose, and he turned eagerly to go out. Sir Patrick nodded his head with the air of a man who had been answered to his own entire satisfaction. "Oh!" he said, "*that's* the attraction, is it?"

Arnold's life at sea had left him singularly ignorant of the ways of the world on shore. Instead of taking the joke, he looked confused. A deeper tinge of color reddened his dark cheeks. "I didn't say so," he answered, a little irritably.

Sir Patrick lifted two of his white, wrinkled old fingers, and good-humoredly patted the young sailor on the cheek.

"Yes, you did," he said. "In red letters."

The little gold lid in the knob of the ivory cane flew up, and the old gentleman rewarded himself for that neat retort with a pinch of snuff. At the same moment Blanche made her appearance on the scene.

"Mr. Brinkworth," she said, "I shall want you directly. Uncle, it's your turn to play."

"Bless my soul!" cried Sir Patrick, "I forgot the game." He looked about him, and saw his mallet and ball left waiting on the table. "Where are the modern substitutes for conversation? Oh, here they are!" He bowled the ball out before him on to the lawn, and tucked the mallet, as if it was an umbrella, under his arm. "Who was the first mistaken person," he said to himself, as he briskly hobbled out, "who discovered that human life was a serious thing? Here am I, with one foot in the grave, and the most serious



question before me at the present moment is, Shall I get through the Hoops?"

Arnold and Blanche were left together.

Among the personal privileges which Nature has accorded to women, there are surely none more enviable than their privilege of always looking their best when they look at the man they love. When Blanche's eyes turned on Arnold, after her uncle had gone out, not even the hideous fashionable disfigurements of the inflated "chignon" and the tilted hat could destroy the triple charm of youth, beauty, and tenderness beaming in her face. Arnold looked at her—and remembered, as he had never remembered yet, that he was going by the next train, and that he was leaving her in the society of more than one admiring man of his own age. The experience of a whole fortnight passed under the same roof with her had proved Blanche to be the most charming girl in existence. It was possible that she might not be mortally offended with him if he told her so. He determined that he *would* tell her so at that auspicious moment.

But who shall presume to measure the abyss that lies between the Intention and the Execution? Arnold's resolution to speak was as firmly settled as a resolution could be. And what came of it? Alas for human infirmity! Nothing came of it but silence.

"You don't look quite at your ease, Mr. Brinkworth," said Blanche. "What has Sir Patrick been saying to you? My uncle sharpens his wit

on everybody. He has been sharpening it on *you!*”

Arnold began to see his way. At an immeasurable distance—but still he saw it.

“Sir Patrick is a terrible old man,” he answered. “Just before you came in he discovered one of my secrets by only looking in my face.” He paused, rallied his courage, pushed on at all hazards, and came headlong to the point. “I wonder,” he asked, bluntly, “whether you take after your uncle?”

Blanche instantly understood him. With time at her disposal, she would have taken him lightly in hand, and led him, by fine gradations, to the object in view. But in two minutes or less it would be Arnold’s turn to play. “He is going to make me an offer,” thought Blanche; “and he has about a minute to do it in. He *shall* do it!”

“What!” she exclaimed, “do you think the gift of discovery runs in the family?”

Arnold made a plunge.

“I wish it did!” he said.

Blanche looked the picture of astonishment.

“Why?” she asked.

“If you could see in my face what Sir Patrick saw—”

He had only to finish the sentence, and the thing was done. But the tender passion perversely delights in raising obstacles to itself. A sudden timidity seized on Arnold exactly at the wrong moment. He stopped short, in the most awkward manner possible.

Blanche heard from the lawn the blow of the mallet on the ball, and the laughter of the company at some blunder of Sir Patrick's. The precious seconds were slipping away. She could have boxed Arnold on both ears for being so unreasonably afraid of her.

"Well," she said, impatiently, "if I did look in your face, what should I see?"

Arnold made another plunge. He answered:

"You would see that I want a little encouragement."

"From *me*?"

"Yes—if you please."

Blanche looked back over her shoulder. The summer-house stood on an eminence, approached by steps. The players on the lawn beneath were audible, but not visible. Any one of them might appear, unexpectedly, at a moment's notice. Blanche listened. There was no sound of approaching footsteps—there was a general hush, and then another bang of the mallet on the ball, and then a clapping of hands. Sir Patrick was a privileged person. He had been allowed, in all probability, to try again; and he was succeeding at the second effort. This implied a reprieve of some seconds. Blanche looked back again at Arnold.

"Consider yourself encouraged," she whispered; and instantly added, with the ineradicable female instinct of self-defense, "within limits!"

Arnold made a last plunge—straight to the bottom, this time.

“Consider yourself loved,” he burst out, “without any limits at all.”

It was all over—the words were spoken—he had got her by the hand. Again the perversity of the tender passion showed itself more strongly than ever. The confession which Blanche had been longing to hear had barely escaped her lover’s lips before Blanche protested against it! She struggled to release her hand. She formally appealed to Arnold to let her go.

Arnold only held her the tighter.

“Do try to like me a little!” he pleaded. “I am so fond of *you!*”

Who was to resist such wooing as this?—when you were privately fond of him yourself, remember! and when you were certain to be interrupted in another moment! Blanche left off struggling, and looked up at her young sailor with a smile.

“Did you learn this method of making love in the merchant-service?” she inquired saucily.

Arnold persisted in contemplating his prospects from the serious point of view.

“I’ll go back to the merchant-service,” he said, “if I have made you angry with me.”

Blanche administered another dose of encouragement.

“Anger, Mr. Brinkworth, is one of the bad passions,” she answered, demurely. “A young lady who has been properly brought up has no bad passions.”

There was a sudden cry from the players on the lawn—a cry for “Mr. Brinkworth.” Blanche



ARNOLD CAUGHT HER ROUND THE WAIST AND KISSED HER.

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 85.





tried to push him out. Arnold was immovable.

"Say something to encourage me before I go," he pleaded. "One word will do. Say, Yes."

Blanche shook her head. Now she had got him, the temptation to tease him was irresistible.

"Quite impossible!" she rejoined. "If you want any more encouragement, you must speak to my uncle."

"I'll speak to him," returned Arnold, "before I leave the house."

There was another cry for "Mr. Brinkworth." Blanche made another effort to push him out.

"Go!" she said. "And mind you get through the hoop!"

She had both hands on his shoulders—her face was close to his—she was simply irresistible. Arnold caught her round the waist and kissed her. Needless to tell him to get through the hoop. He had surely got through it already! Blanche was speechless. Arnold's last effort in the art of courtship had taken away her breath. Before she could recover herself a sound of approaching footsteps became plainly audible. Arnold gave her a last squeeze, and ran out.

She sank on the nearest chair, and closed her eyes in a flutter of delicious confusion.

The footsteps ascending to the summer-house came nearer. Blanche opened her eyes, and saw Anne Silvester, standing alone, looking at her. She sprang to her feet, and threw her arms impulsively round Anne's neck.

"You don't know what has happened," she

whispered. "Wish me joy, darling. He has said the words. He is mine for life!"

All the sisterly love and sisterly confidence of many years was expressed in that embrace, and in the tone in which the words were spoken. The hearts of the mothers, in the past time, could hardly have been closer to each other—as it seemed—than the hearts of the daughters were now. And yet, if Blanche had looked up in Anne's face at that moment, she must have seen that Anne's mind was far away from her little love-story.

"You know who it is?" she went on, after waiting for a reply.

"Mr. Brinkworth?"

"Of course! Who else should it be?"

"And you are really happy, my love?"

"Happy?" repeated Blanche. "Mind! this is strictly between ourselves. I am ready to jump out of my skin for joy. I love him! I love him! I love him!" she cried, with a childish pleasure in repeating the words. They were echoed by a heavy sigh. Blanche instantly looked up into Anne's face. "What's the matter?" she asked, with a sudden change of voice and manner.

"Nothing!"

Blanche's observation saw too plainly to be blinded in that way.

"There *is* something the matter," she said. "Is it money?" she added, after a moment's consideration. "Bills to pay? I have got plenty of money, Anne. I'll lend you what you like."

“No, no, my dear!”

Blanche drew back, a little hurt. Anne was keeping her at a distance for the first time in Blanche's experience of her.

“I tell you all my secrets,” she said. “Why are *you* keeping a secret from *me*? Do you know that you have been looking anxious and out of spirits for some time past? Perhaps you don't like Mr. Brinkworth? No? you *do* like him? Is it my marrying, then? I believe it is! You fancy we shall be parted, you goose? As if I could do without you! Of course, when I am married to Arnold, you will come and live with us. That's quite understood between us—isn't it?”

Anne drew herself suddenly, almost roughly, away from Blanche, and pointed out to the steps.

“There is somebody coming,” she said. “Look!”

The person coming was Arnold. It was Blanche's turn to play, and he had volunteered to fetch her.

Blanche's attention—easily enough distracted on other occasions—remained steadily fixed on Anne.

“You are not yourself,” she said, “and I must know the reason of it. I will wait till to-night; and then you will tell me, when you come into my room. Don't look like that! You *shall* tell me. And there's a kiss for you in the meantime!”

She joined Arnold, and recovered her gayety the moment she looked at him.

“Well! Have you got through the hoops?”

“Never mind the hoops. I have broken the ice with Sir Patrick.”

“What! before all the company!”

“Of course not! I have made an appointment to speak to him here.”

They went laughing down the steps, and joined the game.

Left alone, Anne Silvester walked slowly to the inner and darker part of the summer-house. A glass, in a carved wooden frame, was fixed against one of the side walls. She stopped and looked into it—looked, shuddering, at the reflection of herself.

“Is the time coming,” she said, “when even Blanche will see what I am in my face?”

She turned aside from the glass. With a sudden cry of despair she flung up her arms and laid them heavily against the wall, and rested her head on them with her back to the light. At the same moment a man’s figure appeared—standing dark in the flood of sunshine at the entrance to the summer-house. The man was Geoffrey Delamayn.

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## CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

### THE TWO.

HE advanced a few steps, and stopped. Absorbed in herself, Anne failed to hear him. She never moved.

"I have come, as you made a point of it," he said, sullenly. "But, mind you, it isn't safe."

At the sound of his voice, Anne turned toward him. A change of expression appeared in her face, as she slowly advanced from the back of the summer-house, which revealed a likeness to her mother, not perceivable at other times. As the mother had looked, in by-gone days, at the man who had disowned her, so the daughter looked at Geoffrey Delamayn—with the same terrible composure, and the same terrible contempt.

"Well?" he asked. "What have you got to say to me?"

"Mr. Delamayn," she answered, "you are one of the fortunate people of this world. You are a nobleman's son. You are a handsome man. You are popular at your college. You are free of the best houses in England. Are you something besides all this? Are you a coward and a scoundrel as well?"

He started—opened his lips to speak—checked himself—and made an uneasy attempt to laugh it off. "Come," he said, "keep your temper."

The suppressed passion in her began to force its way to the surface.

"Keep my temper?" she repeated. "Do *you* of all men expect me to control myself? What a memory yours must be! Have you forgotten the time when I was fool enough to think you were fond of me? and mad enough to believe you could keep a promise?"

He persisted in trying to laugh it off. "Mad is a strongish word to use, Miss Silvester!"

"Mad is the right word! I look back at my own infatuation—and I can't account for it; I can't understand myself. What was there in *you*," she asked, with an outbreak of contemptuous surprise, "to attract such a woman as I am?"

His inexhaustible good-nature was proof even against this. He put his hands in his pockets, and said, "I'm sure I don't know."

She turned away from him. The frank brutality of the answer had not offended her. It forced her, cruelly forced her, to remember that she had nobody but herself to blame for the position in which she stood at that moment. She was unwilling to let him see how the remembrance hurt her—that was all. A sad, sad story; but it must be told. In her mother's time, she had been the sweetest, the most lovable of children. In later days, under the care of her mother's friend, her girlhood had passed so harmlessly and so happily—it seemed as if the sleeping passions might sleep forever! She had lived on to the prime of her womanhood—and then, when the treasure of her life was at its richest, in one fatal moment she had flung it away on the man in whose presence she now stood.

Was she without excuse? No: not utterly without excuse.

She had seen him under other aspects than the aspect which he presented now. She had seen



him, the hero of the river-race, the first and foremost man in a trial of strength and skill which had roused the enthusiasm of all England. She had seen him, the central object of the interest of a nation; the idol of the popular worship and the popular applause. *His* were the arms whose muscle was celebrated in the newspapers. *He* was first among the heroes hailed by ten thousand roaring throats as the pride and flower of England. A woman, in an atmosphere of red-hot enthusiasm, witnesses the apotheosis of Physical Strength. Is it reasonable—is it just—to expect her to ask herself, in cold blood, What (morally and intellectually) is all this worth?—and that, when the man who is the object of the apotheosis, notices her, is presented to her, finds her to his taste, and singles her out from the rest? No. While humanity is humanity, the woman is not utterly without excuse.

Has she escaped, without suffering for it?

Look at her as she stands there, tortured by the knowledge of her own secret—the hideous secret which she is hiding from the innocent girl whom she loves with a sister's love. Look at her, bowed down under a humiliation which is unutterable in words. She has seen him below the surface—now, when it is too late. She rates him at his true value—now, when her reputation is at his mercy. Ask her the question: What was there to love in a man who can speak to you as that man has spoken, who can treat you as that man is treating you now? you.

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so clever, so cultivated, so refined—what in Heaven's name, could *you* see in him? Ask her that, and she will have no answer to give. She will not even remind you that he was once your model of manly beauty, too—that you waved your handkerchief till you could wave it no longer, when he took his seat, with the others, in the boat—that your heart was like to jump out of your bosom, on that later occasion when he leaped the last hurdle at the foot-race, and won it by a head. In the bitterness of her remorse, she will not even seek for *that* excuse for herself. Is there no atoning suffering to be seen here? Do your sympathies shrink from such a character as this? Follow her, good friends of virtue, on the pilgrimage that leads, by steep and thorny ways, to the purer atmosphere and the nobler life. Your fellow-creature, who has sinned and has repented—you have the authority of the Divine Teacher for it—is your fellow-creature purified and ennobled. A joy among the angels of heaven—oh, my brothers and sisters of the earth, have I not laid my hand on a fit companion for *You*?

There was a moment of silence in the summer-house? The cheerful tumult of the lawn-party was pleasantly audible from the distance. Outside, the hum of voices, the laughter of girls, the thump of the croquet-mallet against the ball. Inside, nothing but a woman forcing back the bitter tears of sorrow and shame—and a man who was tired of her.

She roused herself. She was her mother's daughter; and she had a spark of her mother's spirit. Her life depended on the issue of that interview. It was useless—without father or brother to take her part—to lose the last chance of appealing to him. She dashed away the tears—time enough to cry, is time easily found in a woman's existence—she dashed away the tears, and spoke to him again, more gently than she had spoken yet.

“You have been three weeks, Geoffrey, at your brother Julius's place, not ten miles from here; and you have never once ridden over to see me. You would not have come to-day, if I had not written to you to insist on it. Is that the treatment I have deserved?”

She paused. There was no answer.

“Do you hear me?” she asked, advancing and speaking in louder tones.

He was still silent. It was not in human endurance to bear his contempt. The warning of a coming outbreak began to show itself in her face. He met it, beforehand, with an impenetrable front. Feeling nervous about the interview, while he was waiting in the rose-garden—now that he stood committed to it, he was in full possession of himself. He was composed enough to remember that he had not put his pipe in its case—composed enough to set that little matter right before other matters went any further. He took the case out of one pocket, and the pipe out of another.

“Go on,” he said quietly. “I hear you.”

She struck the pipe out of his hand at a blow. If she had had the strength she would have struck him down with it on the floor of the summer-house.

"How dare you use me in this way?" she burst out, vehemently. "Your conduct is infamous. Defend it if you can!"

He made no attempt to defend it. He looked, with an expression of genuine anxiety, at the fallen pipe. It was beautifully colored—it had cost him ten shillings. "I'll pick up my pipe first," he said. His face brightened pleasantly—he looked handsomer than ever—as he examined the precious object and put it back in the case. "All right," he said to himself. "She hasn't broken it." His attitude, as he looked at her again, was the perfection of easy grace—the grace that attends on cultivated strength in a state of repose. "I put it to your own common sense," he said, in the most reasonable manner, "what's the good of bullying me? You don't want them to hear you out on the lawn there—do you? You women are all alike. There's no beating a little prudence into your heads, try how one may."

There he waited, expecting her to speak. She waited, on her side, and forced him to go on.

"Look here," he said, "there's no need to quarrel, you know. I don't want to break my promise; but what can I do? I'm not the eldest son. I'm dependent on my father for every farthing I have; and I'm on bad terms with him already. Can't you see it yourself; you're a

lady, and all that, I know. But you're only a governess. It's your interest as well as mine to wait till my father has provided for me. Here it is in a nutshell: if I marry you now, I'm a ruined man."

The answer came, this time.

"You villain! if you *don't* marry me, I am a ruined woman!"

"What do you mean?"

"You know what I mean. Don't look at me in that way."

"How do you expect me to look at a woman who calls me a villain to my face?"

She suddenly changed her tone. The savage element in humanity—let the modern optimists who doubt its existence look at any uncultivated man (no matter how muscular), woman (no matter how beautiful), or child (no matter how young)—began to show itself furtively in his eyes, to utter itself furtively in his voice. Was he to blame for the manner in which he looked at her and spoke to her? Not he! What had there been in the training of *his* life (at school or at college) to soften and subdue the savage element in him? About as much as there had been in the training of his ancestors (without the school or the college) five hundred years since.

It was plain that one of them must give way. The woman had the most at stake—and the woman set the example of submission.

"Don't be hard on me," she pleaded. "I don't mean to be hard on *you*. My temper gets the

better of me. You know my temper. I am sorry I forgot myself. Geoffrey, my whole future is in your hands. Will you do me justice?"

She came nearer, and laid her hand persuasively on his arm.

"Haven't you a word to say to me? No answer? Not even a look?" She waited a moment more. A marked change came over her. She turned slowly to leave the summer-house. "I am sorry to have troubled you, Mr. Delamayn. I won't detain you any longer."

He looked at her. There was a tone in her voice that he had never heard before. There was a light in her eyes that he had never seen in them before. Suddenly and fiercely he reached out his hand, and stopped her.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

She answered, looking him straight in the face, "Where many a miserable woman has gone before me. Out of the world."

He drew her nearer to him, and eyed her closely. Even *his* intelligence discovered that he had brought her to bay, and that she really meant it!

"Do you mean you will destroy yourself?" he said.

"Yes. I mean I will destroy myself."

He dropped her arm. "By Jupiter, she *does* mean it!"

With that conviction in him, he pushed one of the chairs in the summer-house to her with his foot, and signed to her to take it. "Sit down!" he said, roughly. She had frightened



him—and fear comes seldom to men of his type. They feel it, when it does come, with an angry distrust; they grow loud and brutal, in instinctive protest against it. "Sit down!" he repeated. She obeyed him. "Haven't you got a word to say to me?" he asked, with an oath. No! there she sat, immovable, reckless how it ended—as only women can be, when women's minds are made up. He took a turn in the summer-house and came back, and struck his hand angrily on the rail of her chair. "What do you want?"

"You know what I want."

He took another turn. There was nothing for it but to give way on his side, or run the risk of something happening which might cause an awkward scandal, and come to his father's ears.

"Look here, Anne," he began, abruptly. "I have got something to propose."

She looked up at him.

"What do you say to a private marriage?"

Without asking a single question, without making objections, she answered him, speaking as bluntly as he had spoken himself:

"I consent to a private marriage."

He began to temporize directly.

"I own I don't see how it's to be managed—" She stopped him there.

"I do!"

"What!" he cried out, suspiciously. "You have thought of it yourself, have you?"

"Yes."

"And planned for it?"

“And planned for it!”

“Why didn’t you tell me so before?”

She answered haughtily; insisting on the respect which is due to women—the respect which was doubly due from *him*, in her position.

“Because *you* owed it to *me*, sir, to speak first.”

“Very well. I’ve spoken first. Will you wait a little?”

“Not a day!”

The tone was positive. There was no mistaking it. Her mind was made up.

“Where’s the hurry?”

“Have you eyes?” she asked, vehemently. “Have you ears? Do you see how Lady Lundie looks at me? Do you hear how Lady Lundie speaks to me? I am suspected by that woman. My shameful dismissal from this house may be a question of a few hours.” Her head sunk on her bosom; she wrung her clasped hands as they rested on her lap. “And, oh, Blanche!” she moaned to herself, the tears gathering again, and falling, this time, unchecked. “Blanche, who looks up to me! Blanche, who loves me! Blanche, who told me, in this very place, that I was to live with her when she was married!” She started up from the chair; the tears dried suddenly; the hard despair settled again, wan and white, on her face. “Let me go! What is death, compared to such a life as is waiting for *me*?” She looked him over, in one disdainful glance from head to foot; her voice rose to its loudest and firmest tones. “Why, even *you*

would have the courage to die if you were in my place!"

Geoffrey glanced round toward the lawn.

"Hush!" he said. "They will hear you!"

"Let them hear me! When *I* am past hearing *them*, what does it matter?"

He put her back by main force on the chair. In another moment they must have heard her, through all the noise and laughter of the game.

"Say what you want," he resumed, "and I'll do it. Only be reasonable. I can't marry you to-day."

"You can!"

"What nonsense you talk! The house and grounds are swarming with company. It can't be!"

"It can! I have been thinking about it ever since we came to this house. I have got something to propose to you. Will you hear it, or not?"

"Speak lower!"

"Will you hear it, or not?"

"There's somebody coming!"

"Will you hear it, or not?"

"The devil take your obstinacy! Yes!"

The answer had been wrung from him. Still, it was the answer she wanted—it opened the door to hope. The instant he had consented to hear her her mind awakened to the serious necessity of averting discovery by any third person who might stray idly into the summer-house. She held up her hand for silence and listened to what was going forward on the lawn.

The dull thump of the croquet-mallet against the ball was no longer heard. The game had stopped.

In a moment more she heard her own name called. An interval of another instant passed, and a familiar voice said, "I know where she is. I'll fetch her."

She turned to Geoffrey, and pointed to the back of the summer-house.

"It's my turn to play," she said. "And Blanche is coming here to look for me. Wait there, and I'll stop her on the steps."

She went out at once. It was a critical moment. Discovery, which meant moral-ruin to the woman, meant money-ruin to the man. Geoffrey had not exaggerated his position with his father. Lord Holchester had twice paid his debts, and had declined to see him since. One more outrage on his father's rigid sense of propriety, and he would be left out of the will as well as kept out of the house. He looked for a means of retreat, in case there was no escaping unperceived by the front entrance. A door—intended for the use of servants, when picnics and gypsy tea-parties were given in the summer-house—had been made in the back wall. It opened outward, and it was locked. With his strength it was easy to remove that obstacle. He put his shoulder to the door. At the moment when he burst it open he felt a hand on his arm. Anne was behind him, alone.

"You may want it before long," she said, observing the open door, without expressing any

surprise. "You don't want it now. Another person will play for me—I have told Blanche I am not well. Sit down. I have secured a respite of five minutes, and I must make the most of it. In that time, or less, Lady Lundie's suspicions will bring her here—to see how I am. For the present, shut the door."

She seated herself and pointed to a second chair. He took it—with his eye on the closed door.

"Come to the point!" he said, impatiently. "What is it?"

"You can marry me privately to-day," she answered. "Listen—and I will tell you how!"

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## CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

### THE PLAN.

SHE took his hand, and began with all the art of persuasion that she possessed.

"One question, Geoffrey, before I say what I want to say. Lady Lundie has invited you to stay at Windygates. Do you accept her invitation? or do you go back to your brother's in the evening?"

"I can't go back in the evening—they've put a visitor into my room. I'm obliged to stay here. My brother has done it on purpose. Julius helps me when I'm hard up—and bullies me afterward. He has sent me here, on duty for the

family. Somebody must be civil to Lady Lundie—and I'm the sacrifice."

She took him up at his last word. "Don't make the sacrifice," she said. "Apologize to Lady Lundie, and say you are obliged to go back."

"Why?"

"Because we must both leave this place to-day."

There was a double objection to that. If he left Lady Lundie's, he would fail to establish a future pecuniary claim on his brother's indulgence. And if he left with Anne, the eyes of the world would see them, and the whispers of the world might come to his father's ears.

"If we go away together," he said, "good-by to my prospects, and yours, too."

"I don't mean that we shall leave together," she explained. "We will leave separately—and I will go first."

"There will be a hue and cry after you, when you are missed."

"There will be a dance when the croquet is over. I don't dance—and I shall not be missed. There will be time, and opportunity, to get to my own room. I shall leave a letter there for Lady Lundie, and a letter"—her voice trembled for a moment—"and a letter for Blanche. Don't interrupt me! I have thought of this, as I have thought of everything else. The confession I shall make will be the truth in a few hours if it's not the truth now. My letters will say I am privately married, and called away unexpectedly



to join my husband. There will be a scandal in the house, I know. But there will be no excuse for sending after me, when I am under my husband's protection. So far as you are personally concerned, there are no discoveries to fear—and nothing which it is not perfectly safe and perfectly easy to do. Wait here an hour after I have gone, to save appearances; and then follow me."

"Follow you?" interposed Geoffrey. "Where?"

She drew her chair nearer to him, and whispered the next words in his ear.

"To a lonely little mountain inn—four miles from this."

"An inn!"

"Why not?"

"An inn is a public place."

A movement of natural impatience escaped her—but she controlled herself, and went on as quietly as before:

"The place I mean is the loneliest place in the neighborhood. You have no prying eyes to dread there. I have picked it out expressly for that reason. It's away from the railway; it's away from the high-road; it's kept by a decent, respectable Scotchwoman—"

"Decent, respectable Scotchwomen who keep inns," interposed Geoffrey, "don't cotton to young ladies who are traveling alone. The landlady won't receive you."

It was a well-aimed objection—but it missed the mark. A woman bent on her marriage is a woman who can meet the objections of the whole world, single-handed, and refute them all.

"I have provided for everything," she said; "and I have provided for that. I shall tell the landlady I am on my wedding-trip. I shall say my husband is sight-seeing, on foot, among the mountains in the neighborhood—"

"She is sure to believe that!" said Geoffrey.

"She is sure to *disbelieve* it, if you like. Let her! You have only to appear, and to ask for your wife—and there is my story proved to be true! She may be the most suspicious woman living, as long as I am alone with her. The moment you join me, you set her suspicions at rest. Leave me to do my part. My part is the hard one. Will you do yours?"

It was impossible to say No: she had fairly cut the ground from under his feet. He shifted his ground. Anything rather than say Yes!

"I suppose *you* know how we are to be married?" he asked. "All I can say is—I don't."

"You do!" she retorted. "You know that we are in Scotland. You know that there are neither forms, ceremonies, nor delays in marriage here. The plan I have proposed to you secures my being received at the inn, and makes it easy and natural for you to join me there afterward. The rest is in our own hands. A man and a woman who wish to be married (in Scotland) have only to secure the necessary witnesses and the thing is done. If the landlady chooses to resent the deception practiced on her, after that, the landlady may do as she pleases. We shall have gained our object in spite of her

—and, what is more, we shall have gained it without risk to *you*.”

“Don’t lay it all on my shoulders,” Geoffrey rejoined. “You women go headlong at everything. Say we are married. We must separate afterward—or how are we to keep it a secret?”

“Certainly. You will go back, of course, to your brother’s house, as if nothing had happened.”

“And what is to become of *you*?”

“I shall go to London.”

“What are you to do in London?”

“Haven’t I already told you that I have thought of everything? When I get to London I shall apply to some of my mother’s old friends—friends of hers in the time when she was a musician. Everybody tells me I have a voice—if I had only cultivated it. I *will* cultivate it! I can live, and live respectably, as a concert singer. I have saved money enough to support me while I am learning—and my mother’s friends will help me, for her sake.”

So, in the new life that she was marking out, was she now unconsciously reflecting in herself the life of her mother before her. Here was the mother’s career as a public singer, chosen (in spite of all efforts to prevent it) by the child! Here (though with other motives, and under other circumstances) was the mother’s irregular marriage in Ireland, on the point of being followed by the daughter’s irregular marriage in Scotland! And here, stranger still, was the man who was answerable for it—the son of the man

who had found the flaw in the Irish marriage, and had shown the way by which her mother was thrown on the world! "My Anne is my second self. She is not called by her father's name; she is called by mine. She is Anne Silvester, as I was. Will she end like Me?"—The answer to those words—the last words that had trembled on the dying mother's lips—was coming fast. Through the chances and changes of many years, the future was pressing near—and Anne Silvester stood on the brink of it.

"Well?" she resumed. "Are you at the end of your objections? Can you give me a plain answer at last?"

No! He had another objection ready as the words passed her lips.

"Suppose the witnesses at the inn happen to know me?" he said. "Suppose it comes to my father's ears in that way?"

"Suppose you drive me to my death?" she retorted, starting to her feet. "Your father shall know the truth, in that case—I swear it!"

He rose, on his side, and drew back from her. She followed him up. There was a clapping of hands, at the same moment, on the lawn. Somebody had evidently made a brilliant stroke which promised to decide the game. There was no security now that Blanche might not return again. There was every prospect, the game being over, that Lady Lundie would be free. Anne brought the interview to its crisis, without wasting a moment more.

"Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn," she said. "You

have bargained for a private marriage, and I have consented. Are you, or are you not, ready to marry me on your own terms?"

"Give me a minute to think!"

"Not an instant. Once for all, is it Yes, or No?"

He couldn't say "Yes," even then. But he said what was equivalent to it. He asked, savagely, "Where is the inn?"

She put her arm in his, and whispered, rapidly:

"Pass the road on the right that leads to the railway. Follow the path over the moor, and the sheep-track up the hill. The first house you come to after that is the inn. You understand!"

He nodded his head, with a sullen frown, and took his pipe out of his pocket again.

"Let it alone this time," he said, meeting her eye. "My mind's upset. When a man's mind's upset, a man must smoke. What's the name of the place?"

"Craig Fernie."

"Who am I to ask for at the door?"

"For your wife."

"Suppose they want you to give your name when you get there?"

"If I must give a name, I shall call myself Mrs., instead of Miss, Silvester. But I shall do my best to avoid giving any name. And you will do your best to avoid making a mistake, by only asking for me as your wife. Is there anything else you want to know?"

"Yes."

"Be quick about it! What is it?"

“How am I to know you have got away from here?”

“If you don’t hear from me in half an hour from the time when I have left you, you may be sure I have got away. Hush!”

Two voices, in conversation, were audible at the bottom of the steps—Lady Lundie’s voice and Sir Patrick’s. Anne pointed to the door in the back wall of the summer-house. She had just pulled it to again, after Geoffrey had passed through it, when Lady Lundie and Sir Patrick appeared at the top of the steps.

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## CHAPTER THE SIXTH.

### THE SUITOR.

LADY LUNDIE pointed significantly to the door, and addressed herself to Sir Patrick’s private ear.

“Observe!” she said. “Miss Silvester has just got rid of somebody.”

Sir Patrick deliberately looked in the wrong direction, and (in the politest possible manner) observed—nothing.

Lady Lundie advanced into the summer-house. Suspicious hatred of the governess was written legibly in every line of her face. Suspicious distrust of the governess’s illness spoke plainly in every tone of her voice.

“May I inquire, Miss Silvester, if your sufferings are relieved?”



"I am no better, Lady Lundie."

"I beg your pardon?"

"I said I was no better."

"You appear to be able to stand up. When *I* am ill, I am not so fortunate. I am obliged to lie down."

"I will follow your example, Lady Lundie. If you will be so good as to excuse me, I will leave you, and lie down in my own room."

She could say no more. The interview with Geoffrey had worn her out; there was no spirit left in her to resist the petty malice of the woman, after bearing, as she had borne it, the brutish indifference of the man. In another moment the hysterical suffering which she was keeping down would have forced its way outward in tears. Without waiting to know whether she was excused or not, without stopping to hear a word more, she left the summer-house.

Lady Lundie's magnificent black eyes opened to their utmost width, and blazed with their most dazzling brightness. She appealed to Sir Patrick, poised easily on his ivory cane, and looking out at the lawn-party, the picture of venerable innocence.

"After what I have already told you, Sir Patrick, of Miss Silvester's conduct, may I ask whether you consider *that* proceeding at all extraordinary?"

The old gentleman touched the spring in the knob of his cane, and answered, in the courtly manner of the old school:

"I consider no proceeding extraordinary, Lady Lundie, which emanates from your enchanting sex."

He bowed, and took his pinch. With a little jaunty flourish of the hand, he dusted the stray grains of snuff off his finger and thumb, and looked back again at the lawn-party, and became more absorbed in the diversions of his young friends than ever.

Lady Lundie stood her ground, plainly determined to force a serious expression of opinion from her brother-in-law. Before she could speak again, Arnold and Blanche appeared together at the bottom of the steps. "And when does the dancing begin?" inquired Sir Patrick, advancing to meet them, and looking as if he felt the deepest interest in a speedy settlement of the question.

"The very thing I was going to ask mamma," returned Blanche. "Is she in there with Anne? Is Anne better?"

Lady Lundie forthwith appeared, and took the answer to that inquiry on herself.

"Miss Silvester has retired to her room. Miss Silvester persists in being ill. Have you noticed, Sir Patrick, that these half-bred sort of people are almost invariably rude when they are ill?"

Blanche's bright face flushed up. "If you think Anne a half-bred person, Lady Lundie, you stand alone in your opinion. My uncle doesn't agree with you, I'm sure."

Sir Patrick's interest in the first quadrille be-

came almost painful to see. “*Do* tell me, my dear, when *is* the dancing going to begin?”

“The sooner the better,” interposed Lady Lundie; “before Blanche picks another quarrel with me on the subject of Miss Silvester.”

Blanche looked at her uncle. “Begin! begin! Don’t lose time!” cried the ardent Sir Patrick, pointing toward the house with his cane.

“Certainly, uncle! Anything that *you* wish!”

With that parting shot at her step-mother, Blanche withdrew. Arnold, who had thus far waited in silence at the foot of the steps, looked appealingly at Sir Patrick. The train which was to take him to his newly-inherited property would start in less than an hour; and he had not presented himself to Blanche’s guardian in the character of Blanche’s suitor yet! Sir Patrick’s indifference to all domestic claims on him—claims of persons who loved, and claims of persons who hated, it didn’t matter which—remained perfectly unassailable. There he stood, poised on his cane, humming an old Scotch air. And there was Lady Lundie, resolute not to leave him till he had seen the governess with *her* eyes and judged the governess with *her* mind. She returned to the charge—in spite of Sir Patrick, humming at the top of the steps, and of Arnold, waiting at the bottom. (Her enemies said, “No wonder poor Sir Thomas died in a few months after his marriage!” And, oh dear me, our enemies *are* sometimes right!)

“I must once more remind you, Sir Patrick, that I have serious reason to doubt whether Miss

Silvester is a fit companion for Blanche. My governess has something on her mind. She has fits of crying in private. She is up and walking about her room when she ought to be asleep. She posts her own letters—and, she has lately been excessively insolent to Me. There is something wrong. I must take some steps in the matter—and it is only proper that I should do so with your sanction, as head of the family.”

“Consider me as abdicating my position, Lady Lundie, in your favor.”

“Sir Patrick, I beg you to observe that I am speaking seriously, and that I expect a serious reply.”

“My good lady, ask me for anything else and it is at your service. I have not made ‘a serious reply’ since I gave up practice at the Scottish Bar. At my age,” added Sir Patrick, cunningly drifting into generalities, “nothing is serious—except Indigestion. I say, with the philosopher, ‘Life is a comedy to those who think, and a tragedy to those who feel.’” He took his sister-in-law’s hand, and kissed it. “Dear Lady Lundie, why feel?”

Lady Lundie, who had never “felt” in her life, appeared perversely determined to feel, on this occasion. She was offended—and she showed it plainly.

“When you are next called on, Sir Patrick, to judge of Miss Silvester’s conduct,” she said, “unless I am entirely mistaken, you will find yourself *compelled* to consider it as something beyond a joke.” With those words, she walked

out of the summer-house—and so forwarded Arnold's interests by leaving Blanche's guardian alone at last.

It was an excellent opportunity. The guests were safe in the house—there was no interruption to be feared. Arnold showed himself. Sir Patrick (perfectly undisturbed by Lady Lundie's parting speech) sat down in the summer-house, without noticing his young friend, and asked himself a question founded on profound observation of the female sex. "Were there ever two women yet with a quarrel between them," thought the old gentleman, "who didn't want to drag a man into it? Let them drag *me* in, if they can!"

Arnold advanced a step, and modestly announced himself. "I hope I am not in the way, Sir Patrick?"

"In the way! of course not! Bless my soul, how serious the boy looks! Are *you* going to appeal to me as the head of the family next?"

It was exactly what Arnold was about to do. But it was plain that if he admitted it just then Sir Patrick (for some unintelligible reason) would decline to listen to him. He answered cautiously, "I asked leave to consult you in private, sir; and you kindly said you would give me the opportunity before I left Windygates?"

"Ay! ay! to be sure. I remember. We were both engaged in the serious business of croquet at the time—and it was doubtful which of us did that business most clumsily. Well, here is the opportunity; and here am I, with all my

worldly experience, at your service. I have only one caution to give you. Don't appeal to me as 'the head of the family.' My resignation is in Lady Lundie's hands."

He was, as usual, half in jest, half in earnest. The wry twist of humor showed itself at the corners of his lips. Arnold was at a loss how to approach Sir Patrick on the subject of his niece without reminding him of his domestic responsibilities on one hand, and without setting himself up as a target for the shafts of Sir Patrick's wit on the other. In this difficulty, he committed a mistake at the outset. He hesitated.

"Don't hurry yourself," said Sir Patrick. "Collect your ideas. I can wait! I can wait!"

Arnold collected his ideas—and committed a second mistake. He determined on feeling his way cautiously at first. Under the circumstances (and with such a man as he had now to deal with), it was perhaps the rashest resolution at which he could possibly have arrived—it was the mouse attempting to outmaneuver the cat.

"You have been very kind, sir, in offering me the benefit of your experience," he began. "I want a word of advice."

"Suppose you take it sitting?" suggested Sir Patrick. "Get a chair." His sharp eyes followed Arnold with an expression of malicious enjoyment. "Wants my advice?" he thought. "The young humbug wants nothing of the sort—he wants my niece."

Arnold sat down under Sir Patrick's eye, with a well-founded suspicion that he was destined



to suffer, before he got up again, under Sir Patrick's tongue.

"I am only a young man," he went on, moving uneasily in his chair; "and I am beginning a new life—"

"Anything wrong with the chair?" asked Sir Patrick. "Begin your new life comfortably, and get another."

"There's nothing wrong with the chair, sir. Would you—"

"Would I keep the chair, in that case? Certainly."

"I mean, would you advise me—"

"My good fellow, I'm waiting to advise you. (I'm sure there's something wrong with that chair. Why be obstinate about it? Why not get another?)"

"Please don't notice the chair, Sir Patrick—you put me out. I want—in short—perhaps it's a curious question—"

"I can't say till I have heard it," remarked Sir Patrick. "However, we will admit it, for form's sake, if you like. Say it's a curious question. Or let us express it more strongly, if that will help you. Say it's the most extraordinary question that ever was put, since the beginning of the world, from one human being to another."

"It's this!" Arnold burst out, desperately. "I want to be married!"

"That isn't a question," objected Sir Patrick. "It's an assertion. You say, I want to be married. And I say, Just so! And there's an end of it."

Arnold's head began to whirl. "Would you advise me to get married, sir?" he said, piteously. "That's what I meant."

"Oh! that's the object of the present interview, is it? Would I advise you to marry, eh?"

(Having caught the mouse by this time, the cat lifted his paw and let the luckless little creature breathe again. Sir Patrick's manner suddenly freed itself from any slight signs of impatience which it might have hitherto shown, and became as pleasantly easy and confidential as a manner could be. He touched the knob of his cane, and helped himself, with infinite zest and enjoyment, to a pinch of snuff.)

"Would I advise you to marry?" repeated Sir Patrick. "Two courses are open to us, Mr. Arnold, in treating that question. We may put it briefly, or we may put it at great length. I am for putting it briefly. What do you say?"

"What *you* say, Sir Patrick."

"Very good. May I begin by making an inquiry relating to your past life?"

"Certainly!"

"Very good again. When you were in the merchant-service, did you ever have any experience in buying provisions ashore?"

Arnold stared. If any relation existed between that question and the subject in hand it was an impenetrable relation to *him*. He answered, in unconcealed bewilderment:

"Plenty of experience, sir."

"I'm coming to the point," pursued Sir Patrick. "Don't be astonished. I'm coming to the

point. What did you think of your moist sugar when you bought it at the grocer's?"

"Think?" repeated Arnold. "Why, I thought it was moist sugar, to be sure!"

"Marry, by all means!" cried Sir Patrick. "You are one of the few men who can try that experiment with a fair chance of success."

The suddenness of the answer fairly took away Arnold's breath. There was something perfectly electric in the brevity of his venerable friend. He stared harder than ever.

"Don't you understand me?" asked Sir Patrick.

"I don't understand what the moist sugar has got to do with it, sir."

"You don't see that?"

"Not a bit!"

"Then I'll show you," said Sir Patrick, crossing his legs, and setting in comfortably for a good talk. "You go to the tea-shop and get your moist sugar. You take it on the understanding that it *is* moist sugar. But it isn't anything of the sort. It's a compound of adulterations made up to look like sugar. You shut your eyes to that awkward fact, and swallow your adulterated mess in various articles of food; and you and your sugar get on together in that way as well as you can. Do you follow me, so far?"

Yes, Arnold (quite in the dark) followed so far.

"Very good," pursued Sir Patrick. "You go to the marriage shop, and get a wife. You take her on the understanding—let us say—that she

has lovely yellow hair, that she has an exquisite complexion, that her figure is the perfection of plumpness, and that she is just tall enough to carry the plumpness off. You bring her home, and you discover that it's the old story of the sugar over again. Your wife is an adulterated article. Her lovely yellow hair is—dye. Her exquisite skin is—pearl powder. Her plumpness is—padding. And three inches of her height are—in the boot-maker's heels. Shut your eyes, and swallow your adulterated wife as you swallow your adulterated sugar—and, I tell you again, you are one of the few men who can try the marriage experiment with a fair chance of success.”

With that he uncrossed his legs again, and looked hard at Arnold. Arnold read the lesson, at last, in the right way. He gave up the hopeless attempt to circumvent Sir Patrick, and—come what might of it—dashed at a direct allusion to Sir Patrick's niece.

“That may be all very true, sir, of some young ladies,” he said. “There is one I know of, who is nearly related to you, and who doesn't deserve what you have said of the rest of them.”

This was coming to the point. Sir Patrick showed his approval of Arnold's frankness by coming to the point himself, as readily as his own whimsical humor would let him.

“Is this female phenomenon my niece?” he inquired.

“Yes, Sir Patrick.”

“May I ask how you know that my niece is

not an adulterated article, like the rest of them?"

Arnold's indignation loosened the last restraints that tied Arnold's tongue. He exploded in the three words which mean three volumes in every circulating library in the kingdom.

"I love her."

Sir Patrick sat back in his chair, and stretched out his legs luxuriously.

"That's the most convincing answer I ever heard in my life," he said.

"I'm in earnest!" cried Arnold, reckless by this time of every consideration but one. "Put me to the test, sir! put me to the test!"

"Oh, very well. The test is easily put." He looked at Arnold, with the irrepressible humor twinkling merrily in his eyes, and twitching sharply at the corners of his lips. "My niece has a beautiful complexion. Do you believe in her complexion?"

"There's a beautiful sky above our heads," returned Arnold. "I believe in the sky."

"Do you?" retorted Sir Patrick. "You were evidently never caught in a shower. My niece has an immense quantity of hair. Are you convinced that it all grows on her head?"

"I defy any other woman's head to produce the like of it!"

"My dear Arnold, you greatly underrate the existing resources of the trade in hair! Look into the shop-windows. When you next go to London, pray look into the shop-windows. In

the meantime, what do you think of my niece's figure?"

"Oh, come! there can't be any doubt about *that!* Any man, with eyes in his head, can see it's the loveliest figure in the world."

Sir Patrick laughed softly, and crossed his legs again.

"My good fellow, of course it is! The loveliest figure in the world is the commonest thing in the world. At a rough guess, there are forty ladies at this lawn-party. Every one of them possesses a beautiful figure. It varies in price, and when it's particularly seductive, you may swear it comes from Paris. Why, how you stare! When I asked you what you thought of my niece's figure, I meant—how much of it comes from Nature, and how much of it comes from the Shop? I don't know, mind! Do you?"

"I'll take my oath to every inch of it!"

"Shop?"

"Nature!"

Sir Patrick rose to his feet; his satirical humor was silenced at last.

"If ever I have a son," he thought to himself, "that son shall go to sea!" He took Arnold's arm, as a preliminary to putting an end to Arnold's suspense. "If I *can* be serious about anything," he resumed, "it's time to be serious with you. I am convinced of the sincerity of your attachment. All I know of you is in your favor, and your birth and position are beyond dispute. If you have Blanche's consent, you have mine." Arnold attempted to express his gratitude. Sir



Patrick, declining to hear him, went on. "And remember this in the future. When you next want anything that I can give you, ask for it plainly. Don't attempt to mystify *me* on the next occasion, and I will promise, on my side, not to mystify *you*. There, that's understood. Now about this journey of yours to see your estate. Property has its duties, Master Arnold, as well as its rights. The time is fast coming when its rights will be disputed, if its duties are not performed. I have got a new interest in you, and I mean to see that you do your duty. It's settled you are to leave Windygates to-day. Is it arranged how you are to go?"

"Yes, Sir Patrick. Lady Lundie has kindly ordered the gig to take me to the station, in time for the next train."

"When are you to be ready?"

Arnold looked at his watch. "In a quarter of an hour."

"Very good. Mind you *are* ready. Stop a minute! you will have plenty of time to speak to Blanche when I have done with you. You don't appear to me to be sufficiently anxious about seeing your own property."

"I am not very anxious to leave Blanche, sir—that's the truth of it."

"Never mind Blanche. Blanche is not business. They both begin with a B, and that's the only connection between them. I hear you have got one of the finest houses in this part of Scotland. How long are you going to stay in it?"

"I have arranged (as I have already told you,

sir) to return to Windygates the day after to-morrow."

"What! Here is a man with a palace waiting to receive him—and he is only going to stop one clear day in it!"

"I am not going to stop in it at all, Sir Patrick—I am going to stay with the steward. I'm only wanted to be present to-morrow at a dinner to my tenants—and, when that's over, there's nothing in the world to prevent my coming back here. The steward himself told me so in his last letter."

"Oh, if the steward told you so, of course there is nothing more to be said!"

"Don't object to my coming back! pray don't, Sir Patrick! I'll promise to live in my new house, when I have got Blanche to live in it with me. If you won't mind, I'll go and tell her at once that it all belongs to her as well as to me."

"Gently! gently! you talk as if you were married to her already!"

"It's as good as done, sir! Where's the difficulty in the way, now?"

As he asked the question the shadow of some third person, advancing from the side of the summer-house, was thrown forward on the open sunlit space at the top of the steps. In a moment more the shadow was followed by the substance—in the shape of a groom in his riding livery. The man was plainly a stranger to the place. He started, and touched his hat, when he saw the two gentlemen in the summer-house.

“What do you want?” asked Sir Patrick.

“I beg your pardon, sir; I was sent by my master—”

“Who is your master?”

“The Honorable Mr. Delamayn, sir.”

“Do you mean Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn?” asked Arnold.

“No, sir. Mr. Geoffrey’s brother—Mr. Julius. I have ridden over from the house, sir, with a message from my master to Mr. Geoffrey.”

“Can’t you find him?”

“They told me I should find him hereabouts, sir. But I’m a stranger, and don’t rightly know where to look.” He stopped, and took a card out of his pocket. “My master said it was very important I should deliver this immediately. Would you be pleased to tell me, gentlemen, if you happen to know where Mr. Geoffrey is?”

Arnold turned to Sir Patrick. “I haven’t seen him. Have you?”

“I’ve smelled him,” answered Sir Patrick, “ever since I have been in the summer-house. There is a detestable taint of tobacco in the air—suggestive (disagreeably suggestive, to *my* mind) of your friend, Mr. Delamayn.”

Arnold laughed, and stepped outside the summer-house.

“If you are right, Sir Patrick, we will find him at once.” He looked around, and shouted, “Geoffrey!”

A voice from the rose-garden shouted back, “Halloo!”

“You’re wanted. Come here!”

Geoffrey appeared, sauntering doggedly, with his pipe in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets. "Who wants me?"

"A groom—from your brother."

That answer appeared to electrify the lounging and lazy athlete. Geoffrey hurried, with eager steps, to the summer-house. He addressed the groom before the man had time to speak. With horror and dismay in his face, he exclaimed: "By Jupiter! Ratcatcher has relapsed!"

Sir Patrick and Arnold looked at each other in blank amazement.

"The best horse in my brother's stables!" cried Geoffrey, explaining, and appealing to them, in a breath. "I left written directions with the coachman; I measured out his physic for three days; I bled him," said Geoffrey, in a voice broken by emotion—"I bled him myself last night."

"I beg your pardon, sir—" began the groom.

"What's the use of begging my pardon? You're a pack of infernal fools! Where's your horse? I'll ride back, and break every bone in the coachman's skin! Where's your horse?"

"If you please, sir, it isn't Ratcatcher. Ratcatcher's all right."

"Ratcatcher's all right? Then what the devil is it?"

"It's a message, sir."

"About what?"

"About my lord."

"Oh! about my father?" He took out his handkerchief, and passed it over his forehead,

with a deep gasp of relief. "I thought it was Ratcatcher," he said, looking at Arnold, with a smile. He put his pipe into his mouth, and re-kindled the dying ashes of the tobacco. "Well," he went on, when the pipe was in working order, and his voice was composed again, "what's up with my father?"

"A telegram from London, sir. Bad news of my lord."

The man produced his master's card.

Geoffrey read on it (written in his brother's handwriting) these words:

"I have only a moment to scribble a line on my card. Our father is dangerously ill—his lawyer has been sent for. Come with me to London by the first train. Meet at the junction."

Without a word to any one of the three persons present, all silently looking at him, Geoffrey consulted his watch. Anne had told him to wait half an hour, and to assume that she had gone if he failed to hear from her in that time. The interval had passed—and no communication of any sort had reached him. The flight from the house had been safely accomplished. Anne Silvester was, at that moment, on her way to the mountain inn.

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## CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

### THE DEBT.

ARNOLD was the first who broke the silence.

"Is your father seriously ill?" he asked.

Geoffrey answered by handing him the card.

Sir Patrick, who had stood apart (while the question of Ratcatcher's relapse was under discussion) sardonically studying the manners and customs of modern English youth, now came forward, and took his part in the proceedings. Lady Lundie herself must have acknowledged that he spoke and acted as became the head of the family, on this occasion.

"Am I right in supposing that Mr. Delamayn's father is dangerously ill?" he asked, addressing himself to Arnold.

"Dangerously ill, in London," Arnold answered. "Geoffrey must leave Windygates with me. The train I am traveling by meets the train his brother is traveling by, at the junction. I shall leave him at the second station from here."

"Didn't you tell me that Lady Lundie was going to send you to the railway in a gig?"

"Yes."

"If the servant drives, there will be three of you—and there will be no room."

"We had better ask for some other vehicle," suggested Arnold.

Sir Patrick looked at his watch. There was no time to change the carriage. He turned to Geoffrey. "Can you drive, Mr. Delamayn?"

Still impenetrably silent, Geoffrey replied by a nod of the head.

Without noticing the unceremonious manner in which he had been answered, Sir Patrick went on:



"In that case, you can leave the gig in charge of the station-master. I'll tell the servant that he will not be wanted to drive."

"Let me save you the trouble, Sir Patrick," said Arnold.

Sir Patrick declined, by a gesture. He turned again, with undiminished courtesy, to Geoffrey. "It is one of the duties of hospitality, Mr. Delamayn, to hasten your departure under these sad circumstances. Lady Lundie is engaged with her guests. I will see myself that there is no unnecessary delay in sending you to the station." He bowed—and left the summer-house.

Arnold said a word of sympathy to his friend, when they were alone.

"I am sorry for this, Geoffrey. I hope and trust you will get to London in time."

He stopped. There was something in Geoffrey's face—a strange mixture of doubt and bewilderment, of annoyance and hesitation—which was not to be accounted for as the natural result of the news that he had received. His color shifted and changed; he picked fretfully at his finger-nails; he looked at Arnold as if he was going to speak—and then looked away again, in silence.

"Is there something amiss, Geoffrey, besides this bad news about your father?" asked Arnold.

"I'm in the devil's own mess," was the answer.

"Can I do anything to help you?"

Instead of making a direct reply, Geoffrey

lifted his mighty hand, and gave Arnold a friendly slap on the shoulder which shook him from head to foot. Arnold steadied himself, and waited—wondering what was coming next.

“I say, old fellow!” said Geoffrey.

“Yes.”

“Do you remember when the boat turned keel upward in Lisbon Harbor?”

Arnold started. If he could have called to mind his first interview in the summer-house with his father’s old friend, he might have remembered Sir Patrick’s prediction that he would sooner or later pay, with interest, the debt he owed to the man who had saved his life. As it was, his memory reverted at a bound to the time of the boat accident. In the ardor of his gratitude and the innocence of his heart, he almost resented his friend’s question as a reproach which he had not deserved.

“Do you think I can ever forget,” he cried, warmly, “that you swam ashore with me and saved my life?”

Geoffrey ventured a step nearer to the object that he had in view.

“One good turn deserves another,” he said; “don’t it?”

Arnold took his hand. “Only tell me!” he eagerly rejoined, “only tell me what I can do!”

“You are going to-day to see your new place, ain’t you?”

“Yes.”

“Can you put off going till to-morrow?”

“If it’s anything serious—of course I can!”

Geoffrey looked round at the entrance to the summer-house, to make sure that they were alone.

"You know the governess here, don't you?" he said in a whisper.

"Miss Silvester?"

"Yes. I've got into a little difficulty with Miss Silvester. And there isn't a living soul I can ask to help me but *you*."

"You know I will help you. What is it?"

"It isn't so easy to say. Never mind—you're no saint, either, are you? You'll keep it a secret, of course? Look here! I've acted like an infernal fool. I've gone and got the girl into a scrape—"

Arnold drew back, suddenly understanding him.

"Good heavens, Geoffrey! You don't mean—"

"I do! Wait a bit—that's not the worst of it. She has left the house."

"Left the house?"

"Left, for good and all. She can't come back again."

"Why not?"

"Because she's written to her missus. Women (hang 'em!) never do these things by halves. She's left a letter to say she's privately married and gone off to her husband. Her husband is—Me. Not that I'm married to her yet, you understand. I have only promised to marry her. She has gone on first (on the sly) to a place four miles from this. And we settled I was to follow, and marry her privately this afternoon. That's out of the question now. While she's expecting

me at the inn I shall be bowling along to London. Somebody must tell her what has happened—or she'll play the devil, and the whole business will burst up. I can't trust any of the people here. I'm done for, old chap, unless you help me."

Arnold lifted his hands in dismay. "It's the most dreadful situation, Geoffrey, I ever heard of in my life!"

Geoffrey thoroughly agreed with him. "Enough to knock a man over," he said, "isn't it? I'd give something for a drink of beer." He produced his everlasting pipe, from sheer force of habit. "Got a match?" he asked.

Arnold's mind was too preoccupied to notice the question.

"I hope you won't think I'm making light of your father's illness," he said, earnestly. "But it seems to me—I must say it—it seems to me that the poor girl has the first claim on you."

Geoffrey looked at him in surly amazement.

"The first claim on me? Do you think I'm going to risk being cut out of my father's will? Not for the best woman that ever put on a petticoat!"

Arnold's admiration of his friend was the solidly-founded admiration of many years; admiration for a man who could row, box, wrestle, jump—above all, who could swim—as few other men could perform those exercises in contemporary England. But that answer shook his faith. Only for the moment—unhappily for Arnold, only for the moment.

"You know best," he returned, a little coldly.

"What can I do?"

Geoffrey took his arm—roughly, as he took everything; but in a companionable and confidential way.

"Go, like a good fellow, and tell her what has happened. We'll start from here as if we were both going to the railway; and I'll drop you at the foot-path, in the gig. You can get on to your own place afterward by the evening train. It puts you to no inconvenience; and it's doing the kind thing by an old friend. There's no risk of being found out. I'm to drive, remember! There's no servant with us, old boy, to notice and tell tales."

Even Arnold began to see dimly by this time that he was likely to pay his debt of obligation with interest—as Sir Patrick had foretold.

"What am I to say to her?" he asked. "I'm bound to do all I can do to help you, and I will. But what am I to say?"

It was a natural question to put. It was not an easy question to answer. What a man, under given muscular circumstances, could do, no person living knew better than Geoffrey Delamayn. Of what a man, under given social circumstances, could say, no person living knew less.

"Say?" he repeated. "Look here! say I'm half distracted, and all that. And—wait a bit—tell her to stop where she is till I write to her."

Arnold hesitated. Absolutely ignorant of

that low and limited form of knowledge which is called "knowledge of the world," his inbred delicacy of mind revealed to him the serious difficulty of the position which his friend was asking him to occupy as plainly as if he was looking at it through the warily-gathered experience of society of a man of twice his age.

"Can't you write to her now, Geoffrey?" he asked.

"What's the good of that?"

"Consider for a minute, and you will see. You have trusted me with a very awkward secret. I may be wrong—I never was mixed up in such a matter before—but to present myself to this lady as your messenger seems exposing her to a dreadful humiliation. Am I to go and tell her to her face: 'I know what you are hiding from the knowledge of all the world;' and is she to be expected to endure it?"

"Bosh!" said Geoffrey. "They can endure a deal more than you think for. I wish you had heard how she bullied me, in this very place. My good fellow, you don't understand women. The grand secret, in dealing with a woman, is to take her as you take a cat, by the scuff of the neck—"

"I can't face her—unless you will help me by breaking the thing to her first. I'll stick at no sacrifice to serve you; but—hang it!—make allowances, Geoffrey, for the difficulty you are putting me in. I am almost a stranger; I don't know how Miss Silvester may receive me, before I can open my lips."



Those last words touched the question on its practical side. The matter-of-fact view of the difficulty was a view which Geoffrey instantly recognized and understood.

"She has the devil's own temper," he said. "There's no denying that. Perhaps I'd better write. Have we time to go into the house?"

"No. The house is full of people, and we haven't a minute to spare. Write at once, and write here. I have got a pencil."

"What am I to write on?"

"Anything—your brother's card."

Geoffrey took the pencil which Arnold offered to him, and looked at the card. The lines his brother had written covered it. There was no room left. He felt in his pocket, and produced a letter—the letter which Anne had referred to at the interview between them; the letter which she had written to insist on his attending the lawn-party at Windygates.

"This will do," he said. "It's one of Anne's own letters to me. There's room on the fourth page. If I write," he added, turning suddenly on Arnold, "you promise to take it to her? Your hand on the bargain!"

He held out the hand which had saved Arnold's life in Lisbon Harbor, and received Arnold's promise, in remembrance of that time.

"All right, old fellow. I can tell you how to find the place as we go along in the gig. By-the-by, there's one thing that's rather important. I'd better mention it while I think of it."

"What is that?"

"You mustn't present yourself at the inn in your own name; and you mustn't ask for her by *her* name."

"Who am I to ask for?"

"It's a little awkward. She has gone there as a married woman, in case they're particular about taking her in—"

"I understand. Go on."

"And she has planned to tell them (by way of making it all right and straight for both of us, you know) that she expects her husband to join her. If I had been able to go I should have asked at the door for 'my wife.' You are going in my place—"

"And I must ask at the door for 'my wife,' or I shall expose Miss Silvester to unpleasant consequences?"

"You don't object?"

"Not I! I don't care what I say to the people of the inn. It's the meeting with Miss Silvester that I'm afraid of."

"I'll put that right for you—never fear!"

He went at once to the table and rapidly scribbled a few lines—then stopped and considered. "Will that do?" he asked himself. "No; I'd better say something spoony to quiet her." He considered again, added a line, and brought his hand down on the table with a cheery smack. "That will do the business! Read it yourself, Arnold—it's not so badly written."

Arnold read the note without appearing to share his friend's favorable opinion of it.

"This is rather short," he said.

"Have I time to make it longer?"

"Perhaps not. But let Miss Silvester see for herself that you have no time to make it longer. The train starts in less than half an hour. Put the time."

"Oh, all right! and the date, too, if you like."

He had just added the desired words and figures, and had given the revised letter to Arnold, when Sir Patrick returned to announce that the gig was waiting.

"Come!" he said. "You haven't a moment to lose!"

Geoffrey started to his feet. Arnold hesitated.

"I must see Blanche!" he pleaded. "I can't leave Blanche without saying good-by. Where is she?"

Sir Patrick pointed to the steps with a smile. Blanche had followed him from the house. Arnold ran out to her instantly.

"Going?" she said, a little sadly.

"I shall be back in two days," Arnold whispered. "It's all right! Sir Patrick consents."

She held him fast by the arm. The hurried parting before other people seemed to be not a parting to Blanche's taste.

"You will lose the train!" cried Sir Patrick.

Geoffrey seized Arnold by the arm which Blanche was holding, and tore him—literally tore him—away. The two were out of sight, in the shrubbery, before Blanche's indignation found words, and addressed itself to her uncle.

"Why is that brute going away with Mr. Brinkworth?" she asked.

"Mr. Delamayn is called to London by his father's illness," replied Sir Patrick. "You don't like him?"

"I hate him!"

Sir Patrick reflected a little.

"She is a young girl of eighteen," he thought to himself. "And I am an old man of seventy. Curious, that we should agree about anything. More than curious that we should agree in disliking Mr. Delamayn."

He roused himself, and looked again at Blanche. She was seated at the table, with her head on her hand; absent, and out of spirits—thinking of Arnold, and yet, with the future all smooth before them, not thinking happily.

"Why, Blanche! Blanche!" cried Sir Patrick, "one would think he had gone for a voyage round the world. You silly child! he will be back again the day after to-morrow."

"I wish he hadn't gone with that man!" said Blanche. "I wish he hadn't got that man for a friend!"

"There! there! the man was rude enough, I own. Never mind! he will leave the man at the second station. Come back to the ball-room with me. Dance it off, my dear—dance it off!"

"No," returned Blanche. "I'm in no humor for dancing. I shall go upstairs and talk about it to Anne."

"You will do nothing of the sort!" said a third voice, suddenly joining in the conversation.

Both uncle and niece looked up, and found

Lady Lundie at the top of the summer-house steps.

"I forbid you to mention that woman's name again in my hearing," pursued her ladyship. "Sir Patrick! I warned you (if you remember?) that the matter of the governess was not a matter to be trifled with. My worst anticipations are realized. Miss Silvester has left the house!"

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## CHAPTER THE EIGHTH.

### THE SCANDAL.

It was still early in the afternoon when the guests at Lady Lundie's lawn-party began to compare notes together in corners, and to agree in arriving at a general conviction that "something was wrong."

Blanche had mysteriously disappeared from her partners in the dance. Lady Lundie had mysteriously abandoned her guests. Blanche had not come back. Lady Lundie had returned with an artificial smile, and a preoccupied manner. She acknowledged that she was "not very well." The same excuse had been given to account for Blanche's absence—and, again (some time previously), to explain Miss Silvester's withdrawal from the croquet! A wit among the gentlemen declared it reminded him of declining a verb—"I am not very well; thou art not very well; she is not very well," and so on. Sir Patrick too! Only think of the sociable Sir Pat-

rick being in a state of seclusion—pacing up and down by himself in the loneliest part of the garden. And the servants, again! it had even spread to the servants! *They* were presuming to whisper in corners, like their betters. The house-maids appeared, spasmodically, where house-maids had no business to be. Doors banged and petticoats whisked in the upper regions. Something wrong—depend upon it, something wrong! “We had much better go away. My dear, order the carriage.”—“Louisa, love, no more dancing; your papa is going.”—“*Good-afternoon, Lady Lundie!*”—“Haw! thanks very much!”—“*So sorry for dear Blanche!*”—“Oh, it’s been *too* charming!” So Society jabbered its poor, nonsensical little jargon, and got itself politely out of the way before the storm came.

This was exactly the consummation of events for which Sir Patrick had been waiting in the seclusion of the garden.

There was no evading the responsibility which was now thrust upon him. Lady Lundie had announced it as a settled resolution, on her part, to trace Anne to the place in which she had taken refuge, and discover (purely in the interests of virtue) whether she actually was married or not. Blanche (already overwrought by the excitement of the day) had broken into an hysterical passion of tears on hearing the news, and had then, on recovering, taken a view of her own of Anne’s flight from the house. Anne would never have kept her marriage a secret from Blanche; Anne would never have written such a formal farewell



letter as she had written to Blanche—if things were going as smoothly with her as she was trying to make them believe at Windygates. Some dreadful trouble had fallen on Anne—and Blanche was determined (as Lady Lundie was determined) to find out where she had gone, and to follow, and help her.

It was plain to Sir Patrick (to whom both ladies had opened their hearts, at separate interviews) that his sister-in-law, in one way, and his niece in another, were equally likely—if not duly restrained—to plunge headlong into acts of indiscretion which might lead to very undesirable results. A man in authority was sorely needed at Windygates that afternoon—and Sir Patrick was fain to acknowledge that he was the man.

“Much is to be said for, and much is to be said against, a single life,” thought the old gentleman, walking up and down the sequestered garden-path to which he had retired, and applying himself at shorter intervals than usual to the knob of his ivory cane. “This, however, is, I take it, certain. A man’s married friends can’t prevent him from leading the life of a bachelor, if he pleases. But they can, and do, take devilish good care that he shan’t enjoy it!”

Sir Patrick’s meditations were interrupted by the appearance of a servant, previously instructed to keep him informed of the progress of events at the house.

“They’re all gone, Sir Patrick,” said the man.

“That’s a comfort, Simpson. We have no

visitors to deal with now, except the visitors who are staying in the house?"

"None, Sir Patrick."

"They're all gentlemen, are they not?"

"Yes, Sir Patrick."

"That's another comfort, Simpson. Very good. I'll see Lady Lundie first."

Does any other form of human resolution approach the firmness of a woman who is bent on discovering the frailties of another woman whom she hates? You may move rocks, under a given set of circumstances. But here is a delicate being in petticoats, who shrinks if a spider drops on her neck, and shudders if you approach her after having eaten an onion. Can you move *her*, under a given set of circumstances, as set forth above? Not you!

Sir Patrick found her ladyship instituting her inquiries on the same admirably exhaustive system which is pursued, in cases of disappearance, by the police. Who was the last witness who had seen the missing person? Who was the last servant who had seen Anne Silvester? Begin with the men-servants, from the butler at the top to the stable-boy at the bottom. Go on with the woman-servants, from the cook in all her glory to the small female child who weeds the garden. Lady Lundie had cross-examined her way downward as far as the page, when Sir Patrick joined her.

"My dear lady! pardon me for reminding you again that this is a free country, and that you have no claim whatever to investigate Miss Sil-

vester's proceedings after she has left your house."

Lady Lundie raised her eyes, devotionally, to the ceiling. She looked like a martyr to duty. If you had seen her ladyship at that moment, you would have said yourself, "A martyr to duty."

"No, Sir Patrick! As a Christian woman, that is not *my* way of looking at it. This unhappy person has lived under my roof. This unhappy person has been the companion of Blanche. I am responsible—I am, in a manner, morally responsible. I would give the world to be able to dismiss it as you do. But no! I must be satisfied that she *is* married. In the interests of propriety. For the quieting of my own conscience. Before I lay my head on my pillow to-night, Sir Patrick—before I lay my head on my pillow to-night!"

"One word, Lady Lundie—"

"No!" repeated her ladyship, with the most pathetic gentleness. "You are right, I dare say, from the worldly point of view. I can't take the worldly point of view. The worldly point of view hurts me." She turned, with impressive gravity, to the page. "You know where you will go, Jonathan, if you tell lies!"

Jonathan was lazy, Jonathan was pimply, Jonathan was fat—but Jonathan was orthodox. He answered that he did know; and, what is more, he mentioned the place.

Sir Patrick saw that further opposition on his part, at that moment, would be worse than use-

less. He wisely determined to wait, before he interfered again, until Lady Lundie had thoroughly exhausted herself and her inquiries. At the same time—as it was impossible, in the present state of her ladyship's temper, to provide against what might happen if the inquiries after Anne unluckily proved successful—he decided on taking measures to clear the house of the guests (in the interests of all parties) for the next four-and-twenty hours.

“I only want to ask you a question, Lady Lundie,” he resumed. “The position of the gentlemen who are staying here is not a very pleasant one while all this is going on. If you had been content to let the matter pass without notice, we should have done very well. As things are, don't you think it will be more convenient to everybody if I relieve you of the responsibility of entertaining your guests?”

“As head of the family?” stipulated Lady Lundie.

“As head of the family!” answered Sir Patrick.

“I gratefully accept the proposal,” said Lady Lundie.

“I beg you won't mention it,” rejoined Sir Patrick.

He quitted the room, leaving Jonathan under examination. He and his brother (the late Sir Thomas) had chosen widely different paths in life, and had seen but little of each other since the time when they had been boys. Sir Patrick's recollections (on leaving Lady Lundie) appeared

to have taken him back to that time, and to have inspired him with a certain tenderness for his brother's memory. He shook his head, and sighed a sad little sigh. "Poor Tom!" he said to himself, softly, after he had shut the door on his brother's widow. "Poor Tom!"

On crossing the hall, he stopped the first servant he met, to inquire after Blanche. Miss Blanche was quiet, upstairs, closeted with her maid in her own room. "Quiet?" thought Sir Patrick. "That's a bad sign. I shall hear more of my niece."

Pending that event, the next thing to do was to find the guests. Unerring instinct led Sir Patrick to the billiard-room. There he found them, in solemn conclave assembled, wondering what they had better do. Sir Patrick put them all at their ease in two minutes.

"What do you say to a day's shooting to-morrow?" he asked.

Every man present—sportsman or not—said yes.

"You can start from this house," pursued Sir Patrick; "or you can start from a shooting-cottage which is on the Windygates property—among the woods, on the other side of the moor. The weather looks pretty well settled (for Scotland), and there are plenty of horses in the stables. It is useless to conceal from you, gentlemen, that events have taken a certain unexpected turn in my sister-in-law's family circle. You will be equally Lady Lundie's guests, whether you choose the cottage or the house. For the

next twenty-four hours (let us say)—which shall it be?”

Everybody—with or without rheumatism—answered “the cottage!”

“Very good,” pursued Sir Patrick. “It is arranged to ride over to the shooting-cottage this evening, and to try the moor, on that side, the first thing in the morning. If events here will allow me, I shall be delighted to accompany you, and do the honors as well as I can. If not, I am sure you will accept my apologies for to-night, and permit Lady Lundie’s steward to see to your comfort in my place.”

Adopted unanimously. Sir Patrick left the guests to their billiards, and went out to give the necessary orders at the stables.

In the meantime, Blanche remained portentously quiet in the upper regions of the house; while Lady Lundie steadily pursued her inquiries downstairs. She got on from Jonathan (last of the males, indoors) to the coachman (first of the males, out-of-doors), and dug down, man by man, through that new stratum, until she struck the stable-boy at the bottom. Not an atom of information having been extracted, in the house or out of the house, from man or boy, her ladyship fell back on the women next. She pulled the bell, and summoned the cook—Hester Dethridge.

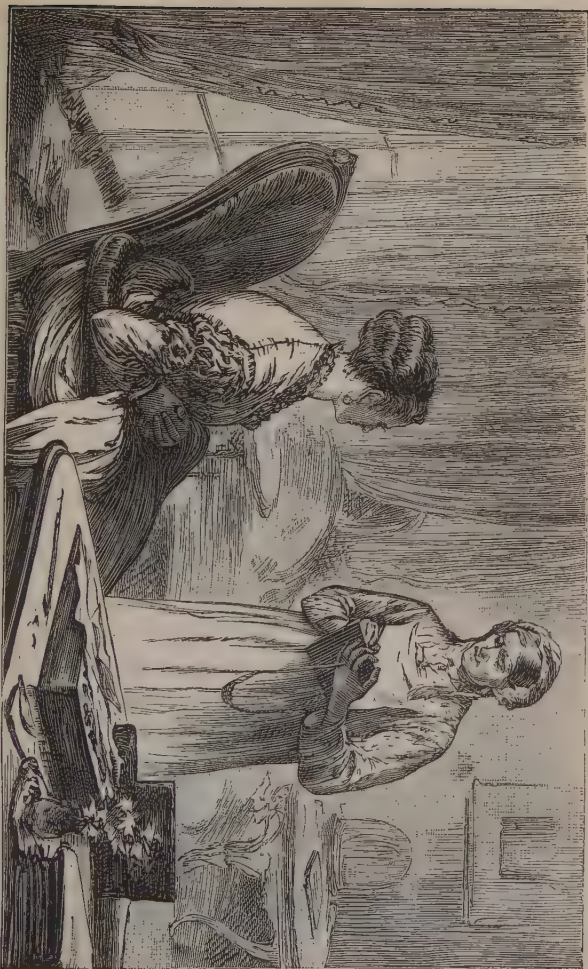
A very remarkable-looking person entered the room.

Elderly and quiet; scrupulously clean; emi-



nently respectable; her gray hair neat and smooth under her modest white cap; her eyes, set deep in their orbits, looking straight at any person who spoke to her—here, at a first view, was a steady, trustworthy woman. Here, also, on closer inspection, was a woman with the seal of some terrible past suffering set on her for the rest of her life. You felt it, rather than saw it, in the look of immovable endurance which underlaid her expression—in the death-like tranquillity which never disappeared from her manner. Her story was a sad one—so far as it was known. She had entered Lady Lundie's service at the period of Lady Lundie's marriage to Sir Thomas. Her character (given by the clergyman of her parish) described her as having been married to an inveterate drunkard, and as having suffered unutterably during her husband's lifetime. There were drawbacks to engaging her, now that she was a widow. On one of the many occasions on which her husband had personally ill-treated her, he had struck her a blow which had produced very remarkable nervous results. She had lain insensible many days together, and had recovered with the total loss of her speech. In addition to this objection, she was odd, at times, in her manner; and she made it a condition of accepting any situation, that she should be privileged to sleep in a room by herself. As a set-off against all this, it was to be said, on the other side of the question, that she was sober; rigidly honest in all her dealings; and one of the best cooks in England. In con-

sideration of this last merit, the late Sir Thomas had decided on giving her a trial, and had discovered that he had never dined in his life as he dined when Hester Dethridge was at the head of his kitchen. She remained, after his death, in his widow's service. Lady Lundie was far from liking her. An unpleasant suspicion attached to the cook, which Sir Thomas had overlooked, but which persons less sensible of the immense importance of dining well could not fail to regard as a serious objection to her. Medical men, consulted about her case, discovered certain physiological anomalies in it which led them to suspect the woman of feigning dumbness, for some reason best known to herself. She obstinately declined to learn the deaf and dumb alphabet—on the ground that dumbness was not associated with deafness in her case. Stratagems were invented (seeing that she really did possess the use of her ears) to entrap her into also using her speech, and failed. Efforts were made to induce her to answer questions relating to her past life in her husband's time. She flatly declined to reply to them, one and all. At certain intervals, strange impulses to get a holiday away from the house appeared to seize her. If she was resisted, she passively declined to do her work. If she was threatened with dismissal, she impenetrably bowed her head, as much as to say, "Give me the word, and I go." Over and over again Lady Lundie had decided, naturally enough, on no longer keeping such a servant as this; but she had never yet carried the decision



SHE TOOK UP THE SLATE AND PENCIL, AND WAITED FOR HER MISTRESS TO BEGIN.

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 147.



to execution. A cook who is a perfect mistress of her art, who asks for no perquisites, who allows no waste, who never quarrels with the other servants, who drinks nothing stronger than tea, who is to be trusted with untold gold—is not a cook easily replaced. In this mortal life we put up with many persons and things, as Lady Lundie put up with her cook. The woman lived, as it were, on the brink of dismissal; but thus far the woman kept her place—getting her holidays when she asked for them (which, to do her justice, was not often), and sleeping always (go where she might with the family) with a locked door, in a room by herself.

Hester Dethridge advanced slowly to the table at which Lady Lundie was sitting. A slate and pencil hung at her side, which she used for making such replies as were not to be expressed by a gesture or by a motion of the head. She took up the slate and pencil, and waited with stony submission for her mistress to begin.

Lady Lundie opened the proceedings with the regular formula of inquiry which she had used with all the other servants.

“Do you know that Miss Silvester has left the house?”

The cook nodded her head affirmatively.

“Do you know at what time she left it?”

Another affirmative reply. The first which Lady Lundie had received to that question yet. She eagerly went on to the next inquiry.

“Have you seen her since she left the house?”

A third affirmative reply.

“Where?”

Hester Dethridge wrote slowly on the slate, in singularly firm, upright characters for a woman in her position of life, these words:

“On the road that leads to the railway. Nigh to Mistress Chew’s Farm.”

“What did you want at Chew’s Farm?”

Hester Dethridge wrote: “I wanted eggs for the kitchen, and a breath of fresh air for myself.”

“Did Miss Silvester see you?”

A negative shake of the head.

“Did she take the turning that leads to the railway?”

Another negative shake of the head.

“She went on toward the moor?”

An affirmative reply.

“What did she do when she got to the moor?”

Hester Dethridge wrote: “She took the foot-path which leads to Craig Fernie.”

Lady Lundie rose excitedly to her feet. There was but one place that a stranger could go to at Craig Fernie. “The inn!” exclaimed her ladyship. “She has gone to the inn!”

Hester Dethridge waited immovably. Lady Lundie put a last precautionary question, in these words: “Have you reported what you have seen to anybody else?”

An affirmative reply. Lady Lundie had not bargained for that. Hester Dethridge (she thought) must surely have misunderstood her.

“Do you mean that you have told somebody else what you have just told me?”

Another affirmative reply.



"A person who questioned you, as I have done?"

A third affirmative reply.

"Who was it?"

Hester Dethridge wrote on her slate: "Miss Blanche."

Lady Lundie stepped back, staggered by the discovery that Blanche's resolution to trace Anne Silvester was, to all appearance, as firmly settled as her own. Her step-daughter was keeping her own counsel, and acting on her own responsibility—her step-daughter might be an awkward obstacle in the way. The manner in which Anne had left the house had mortally offended Lady Lundie. An inveterately vindictive woman, she had resolved to discover whatever compromising elements might exist in the governess's secret, and to make them public property (from a paramount sense of duty, of course) among her own circle of friends. But to do this—with Blanche acting (as might certainly be anticipated) in direct opposition to her, and openly espousing Miss Silvester's interests—was manifestly impossible.

The first thing to be done—and that instantly—was to inform Blanche that she was discovered, and to forbid her to stir in the matter.

Lady Lundie rang the bell twice—thus intimating, according to the laws of the household, that she required the attendance of her own maid. She then turned to the cook—still waiting her pleasure, with stony composure, slate in hand.

"You have done wrong," said her ladyship, severely. "I am your mistress. You are bound to answer your mistress—"

Hester Dethridge bowed her head, in icy acknowledgment of the principle laid down—so far.

The bow was an interruption. Lady Lundie resented it.

"But Miss Blanche is *not* your mistress," she went on, sternly. "You are very much to blame for answering Miss Blanche's inquiries about Miss Silvester."

Hester Dethridge, perfectly unmoved, wrote her justification on her slate, in two stiff sentences: "I had no orders *not* to answer. I keep nobody's secrets but my own."

That reply settled the question of the cook's dismissal—the question which had been pending for months past.

"You are an insolent woman! I have borne with you long enough—I will bear with you no longer. When your month is up, you go!"

In those words Lady Lundie dismissed Hester Dethridge from her service.

Not the slightest change passed over the sinister tranquillity of the cook. She bowed her head again, in acknowledgment of the sentence pronounced on her—dropped her slate at her side—turned about—and left the room. The woman was alive in the world, and working in the world; and yet (so far as all human interests were concerned) she was as completely out of the world as if she had been screwed down in her coffin and laid in her grave.

Lady Lundie's maid came into the room as Hester left it.

"Go upstairs to Miss Blanche," said her mistress, "and say I want her here. Wait a minute!" She paused, and considered. Blanche might decline to submit to her step-mother's interference with her. It might be necessary to appeal to the higher authority of her guardian. "Do you know where Sir Patrick is?" asked Lady Lundie.

"I heard Simpson say, my lady, that Sir Patrick was at the stables."

"Send Simpson with a message. My compliments to Sir Patrick—and I wish to see him immediately."

\* \* \* \* \*

The preparations for the departure to the shooting-cottage were just completed; and the one question that remained to be settled was, whether Sir Patrick could accompany the party—when the man-servant appeared with the message from his mistress.

"Will you give me a quarter of an hour, gentlemen?" asked Sir Patrick. "In that time I shall know for certain whether I can go with you or not."

As a matter of course, the guests decided to wait. The younger men among them (being Englishmen) naturally occupied their leisure time in betting. Would Sir Patrick get the better of the domestic crisis? or would the domestic crisis get the better of Sir Patrick? The domestic crisis was backed, at two to one, to win.

Punctually at the expiration of the quarter of an hour, Sir Patrick reappeared. The domestic crisis had betrayed the blind confidence which youth and inexperience had placed in it. Sir Patrick had won the day.

“Things are settled and quiet, gentlemen; and I am able to accompany you,” he said. “There are two ways to the shooting-cottage. One—the longest—passes by the inn at Craig Fernie. I am compelled to ask you to go with me by that way. While you push on to the cottage, I must drop behind, and say a word to a person who is staying at the inn.”

He had quieted Lady Lundie—he had even quieted Blanche. But it was evidently on the condition that he was to go to Craig Fernie in their places, and to see Anne Silvester himself. Without a word more of explanation he mounted his horse and led the way out. The shooting-party left Windygates.

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## *SECOND SCENE.—THE INN.*

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### CHAPTER THE NINTH.

ANNE.

“YE’LL just permit me to remind ye again, young leddy, that the hottle’s full—exceptin’

only this settin'-room, and the bed-chamber yonder belonging to it."

So spoke "Mistress Inchbare," landlady of the Craig Fernie Inn, to Anne Silvester, standing in the parlor, purse in hand, and offering the price of the two rooms before she claimed permission to occupy them.

The time of the afternoon was about the time when Geoffrey Delamayn had started in the train, on his journey to London. About the time, also, when Arnold Brinkworth had crossed the moor, and was mounting the first rising ground which led to the inn.

Mistress Inchbare was tall and thin, and decent and dry. Mistress Inchbare's unlovable hair clung fast round her head in wiry little yellow curls. Mistress Inchbare's hard bones showed themselves, like Mistress Inchbare's hard Presbyterianism, without any concealment or compromise. In short, a savagely-respectable woman, who plumed herself on presiding over a savagely-respectable inn.

There was no competition to interfere with Mistress Inchbare. She regulated her own prices and made her own rules. If you objected to her prices, and revolted from her rules, you were free to go. In other words, you were free to cast yourself, in the capacity of houseless wanderer, on the scanty mercy of a Scotch wilderness. The village of Craig Fernie was a collection of hovels. The country about Craig Fernie, mountain on one side and moor on the other, held no second house of public entertain-

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ment, for miles and miles round, at any point of the compass. No rambling individual but the helpless British Tourist wanted food and shelter from strangers, in that part of Scotland; and nobody but Mistress Inchbare had food and shelter to sell. A more thoroughly independent person than this was not to be found on the face of the hotel-keeping earth. The most universal of all civilized terrors—the terror of appearing unfavorably in the newspapers—was a sensation absolutely unknown to the Empress of the Inn. You lost your temper, and threatened to send her bill for exhibition in the public journals. Mistress Inchbare raised no objection to your taking any course you pleased with it. “Eh, man! send the bill whar’ ye like, as long as ye pay it first. There’s nae such thing as a newspaper ever darkens my doors. Ye’ve got the Auld and New Testaments in your bed-chambers, and the natural history o’ Pairthshire on the coffee-room table—and if that’s no’ reading enough for ye, ye may een gae back South again, and get the rest of it there.”

This was the inn at which Anne Silvester had appeared alone, with nothing but a little bag in her hand. This was the woman whose reluctance to receive her she innocently expected to overcome by showing her purse.

“Mention your charge for the rooms,” she said. “I am willing to pay for them beforehand.”

Her majesty, Mrs. Inchbare, never even looked at her subject’s poor little purse.



"It just comes to this, mistress," she answered. "I'm no' free to tak' your money, if I'm no' free to let ye the last rooms left in the hoose. The Craig Fernie hottle is a faimily hottle—and has its ain gude name to keep up. Ye're ower-well-looking, my young leddy, to be traveling alone."

The time had been when Anne would have answered sharply enough. The hard necessities of her position made her patient now.

"I have already told you," she said, "my husband is coming here to join me." She sighed wearily as she repeated her ready-made story—and dropped into the nearest chair, from sheer inability to stand any longer.

Mistress Inchbare looked at her, with the exact measure of compassionate interest which she might have shown if she had been looking at a stray dog who had fallen foot-sore at the door of the inn.

"Weel! weel! sae let it be. Bide awhile, and rest ye. We'll no' chaarge ye for that—and we'll see if your husband comes. I'll just let the rooms, mistress, to *him*, instead o' lettin' them to *you*. And, sae, good-morrow t' ye." With that final announcement of her royal will and pleasure, the Empress of the Inn withdrew.

Anne made no reply. She watched the landlady out of the room—and then struggled to control herself no longer. In her position, suspicion was doubly insult. The hot tears of shame gathered in her eyes; and the heart-ache wrung her, poor soul—wrung her without mercy.

A trifling noise in the room startled her. She looked up, and detected a man in a corner dusting the furniture, and apparently acting in the capacity of attendant at the inn. He had shown her into the parlor on her arrival; but he had remained so quietly in the room that she had never noticed him since, until that moment.

He was an ancient man—with one eye filmy and blind, and one eye moist and merry. His head was bald; his feet were gouty; his nose was justly celebrated as the largest nose and the reddest nose in that part of Scotland. The mild wisdom of years was expressed mysteriously in his mellow smile. In contact with this wicked world, his manner revealed that happy mixture of two extremes—the servility which just touches independence, and the independence which just touches servility—attained by no men in existence but Scotchmen. Enormous native impudence, which amused but never offended; immeasurable cunning, masquerading habitually under the double disguise of quaint prejudice and dry humor, were the solid moral foundations on which the character of this elderly person was built. No amount of whisky ever made him drunk; and no violence of bell-ringing ever hurried his movements. Such was the head-waiter at the Craig Fernie Inn; known, far and wide, to local fame, as “Maister Bishopriggs, Mistress Inchbare’s right-hand man.”

“What are you doing there?” Anne asked, sharply.

Mr. Bishopriggs turned himself about on his

gouty feet; waved his duster gently in the air; and looked at Anne, with a mild, paternal smile.

“Eh! Am just doostin’ the things; and settin’ the room in decent order for ye.”

“For *me*? Did you hear what the landlady said?”

Mr. Bishopriggs advanced confidentially, and pointed with a very unsteady finger to the purse which Anne still held in her hand.

“Never fash yoursel’ about the landleddy!” said the sage chief of the Craig Fernie waiters.

“Your purse speaks for you, my lassie. Pet it up!” cried Mr. Bishopriggs, waving temptation away from him with the duster. “In wi’ it into yer pocket! Sae long as the world’s the world, I’ll uphaud it anywhere—while there’s siller in the purse, there’s gude in the woman!”

Anne’s patience, which had resisted harder trials, gave way at this.

“What do you mean by speaking to me in that familiar manner?” she asked, rising angrily to her feet again.

Mr. Bishopriggs tucked his duster under his arm, and proceeded to satisfy Anne that he shared the landlady’s view of her position, without sharing the severity of the landlady’s principles. “There’s nae man livin’,” said Mr. Bishopriggs, “looks with mair indulgence at human frailty than my ain sel’. Am I no’ to be familiar wi’ ye—when I’m auld enough to be a fether to ye, and ready to be a fether to ye till further notice? Hech! hech! Order your bit dinner, lassie. Husband or no husband, ye’ve

got a stomach, and ye must een eat. There's fesh and there's fowl—or, maybe, ye'll be for the sheep's-head singit, when they've done with it at the tabble dot?"

There was but one way of betting rid of him: "Order what you like," Anne said, "and leave the room." Mr. Bishopriggs highly approved of the first half of the sentence, and totally overlooked the second.

"Ay, ay—just pet a' yer little interests in my hands; it's the wisest thing ye can do. Ask for Maister Bishopriggs (that's me) when ye want a decent 'sponsible man to gi' ye a word of advice. Set ye doon again—set ye doon. And don't tak' the arm-chair. Hech! hech! yer husband will be coming, ye know, and he's sure to want it!" With that seasonable pleasantry the venerable Bishopriggs winked, and went out.

Anne looked at her watch. By her calculation it was not far from the hour when Geoffrey might be expected to arrive at the inn, assuming Geoffrey to have left Windygates at the time agreed on. A little more patience, and the landlady's scruples would be satisfied, and the ordeal would be at an end.

Could she have met him nowhere else than at this barbarous house and among these barbarous people?

No. Outside the doors of Windygates she had not a friend to help her in all Scotland. There was no place at her disposal but the inn; and she had only to be thankful that it occupied a sequestered situation, and was not likely to be

visited by any of Lady Lundie's friends. Whatever the risk might be, the end in view justified her in confronting it. Her whole future depended on Geoffrey's making an honest woman of her. Not her future with *him*—that way there was no hope; that way her life was wasted. Her future with Blanche—she looked forward to nothing now but her future with Blanche.

Her spirits sank lower and lower. The tears rose again. It would only irritate him if he came and found her crying. She tried to divert her mind by looking about the room.

There was very little to see. Except that it was solidly built of good sound stone, the Craig Fernie hotel differed in no other important respect from the average of second-rate English inns. There was the usual slippery black sofa—constructed to let you slide when you wanted to rest. There was the usual highly-varnished arm-chair, expressly manufactured to test the endurance of the human spine. There was the usual paper on the walls, of the pattern designed to make your eyes ache and your head giddy. There were the usual engravings, which humanity never tires of contemplating. The Royal Portrait, in the first place of honor. The next greatest of all human beings—the Duke of Wellington—in the second place of honor. The third greatest of all human beings—the local member of Parliament—in the third place of honor; and a hunting scene in the dark. A door opposite the door of admission from the passage opened into the bedroom; and a window at the side

looked out on the open space in front of the hotel, and commanded a view of the vast expanse of the Craig Fernie moor, stretching away below the rising ground on which the house was built.

Anne turned in despair from the view in the room to the view from the window. Within the last half hour it had changed for the worse. The clouds had gathered; the sun was hidden; the light on the landscape was gray and dull. Anne turned from the window, as she had turned from the room. She was just making the hopeless attempt to rest her weary limbs on the sofa, when the sound of voices and footsteps in the passage caught her ear.

Was Geoffrey's voice among them? No.

Were the strangers coming in?

The landlady had declined to let her have the rooms: it was quite possible that the strangers might be coming to look at them. There was no knowing who they might be. In the impulse of the moment she flew to the bed-chamber and locked herself in.

The door from the passage opened, and Arnold Brinkworth—shown in by Mr. Bishopriggs—entered the sitting-room.

"Nobody here!" exclaimed Arnold, looking round. "Where is she?"

Mr. Bishopriggs pointed to the bedroom door. "Eh! yer good leddy's joost in the bed-chamber, nae doot!"

Arnold started. He had felt no difficulty (when he and Geoffrey had discussed the ques-



tion at Windygates) about presenting himself at the inn in the assumed character of Anne's husband. But the result of putting the deception in practice was, to say the least of it, a little embarrassing at first. Here was the waiter describing Miss Silvester as his "good lady;" and leaving it (most naturally and properly) to the "good lady's" husband to knock at her bedroom door, and tell her that he was there. In despair of knowing what else to do at the moment, Arnold asked for the landlady, whom he had not seen on arriving at the inn.

"The landleddy's júst tottin' up the ledgers o' the hottle in her ain room," answered Mr. Bishopriggs. "She'll be here anon—the wearyful woman!—speerin' who ye are and what ye are, and takin' a' the business o' the hoose on her ain pair o' shouthers." He dropped the subject of the landlady, and put in a plea for himself. "I ha' lookit after a' the leddy's little comforts, sir," he whispered. "Trust in me! trust in me!"

Arnold's attention was absorbed in the very serious difficulty of announcing his arrival to Anne. "How am I to get her out?" he said to himself, with a look of perplexity directed at the bedroom door.

He had spoken loud enough for the waiter to hear him. Arnold's look of perplexity was instantly reflected on the face of Mr. Bishopriggs. The head-waiter at Craig Fernie possessed an immense experience of the manners and customs of newly-married people on their honeymoon



trip. He had been a second father (with excellent pecuniary results) to innumerable brides and bridegrooms. He knew young married couples in all their varieties:—The couples who try to behave as if they had been married for many years; the couples who attempt no concealment, and take advice from competent authorities about them. The couples who are bashfully talkative before third persons; the couples who are bashfully silent under similar circumstances. The couples who don't know what to do; the couples who wish it was over; the couples who must never be intruded upon without careful preliminary knocking at the door; the couples who *can* eat and drink in the intervals of "bliss," and the other couples who *can't*. But the bridegroom who stood helpless on one side of the door, and the bride who remained locked in on the other, were new varieties of the nuptial species, even in the vast experience of Mr. Bishopriggs himself.

"Hoo are ye to get her oot?" he repeated. "I'll show ye hoo!" He advanced as rapidly as his gouty feet would let him and knocked at the bedroom door. "Eh, my leddy! here he is in flesh and bluid. Mercy preserve us! do ye lock the door of the nuptial-chamber in your husband's face?"

At that unanswerable appeal the lock was heard turning in the door. Mr. Bishopriggs winked at Arnold with his one available eye, and laid his forefinger knowingly along his enormous nose. "I'm away before she falls into

your arms! Rely on it, I'll no come in again without knocking first!"

He left Arnold alone in the room. The bedroom door opened slowly by a few inches at a time. Anne's voice was just audible, speaking cautiously behind it.

"Is that you, Geoffrey?"

Arnold's heart began to beat fast, in anticipation of the disclosure which was now close at hand. He knew neither what to say or do—he remained silent.

Anne repeated the question in louder tones:

"Is that you?"

There was the certain prospect of alarming her, if some reply was not given. There was no help for it. Come what come might, Arnold answered, in a whisper:

"Yes."

The door was flung wide open. Anne Silvester appeared on the threshold, confronting him.

"Mr. Brinkworth!!!" she exclaimed, standing petrified with astonishment.

For a moment more neither of them spoke. Anne advanced one step into the sitting-room, and put the next inevitable question, with an instantaneous change from surprise to suspicion.

"What do you want here?"

Geoffrey's letter represented the only possible excuse for Arnold's appearance in that place, and at that time.

"I have got a letter for you," he said—and offered it to her.

She was instantly on her guard. They were

little better than strangers to each other, as Arnold had said. A sickening presentiment of some treachery on Geoffrey's part struck cold to her heart. She refused to take the letter.

"I expect no letter," she said. "Who told you I was here?" She put the question, not only with a tone of suspicion, but with a look of contempt. The look was not an easy one for a man to bear. It required a momentary exertion of self-control on Arnold's part, before he could trust himself to answer with due consideration for her. "Is there a watch set on my actions?" she went on, with rising anger. "And are *you* the spy?"

"You haven't known me very long, Miss Silvester," Arnold answered, quietly. "But you ought to know me better than to say that. I am the bearer of a letter from Geoffrey."

She was on the point of following his example, and of speaking of Geoffrey by his Christian name, on her side. But she checked herself before the word had passed her lips.

"Do you mean Mr. Delamayn?" she asked, coldly.

"Yes."

"What occasion have *I* for a letter from Mr. Delamayn?"

She was determined to acknowledge nothing—she kept him obstinately at arm's-length. Arnold did, as a matter of instinct, what a man of larger experience would have done as a matter of calculation—he closed with her boldly, then and there.

"Miss Silvester! it's no use beating about the bush. If you won't take the letter, you force me to speak out. I am here on a very unpleasant errand. I begin to wish, from the bottom of my heart, I had never undertaken it."

A quick spasm of pain passed across her face. She was beginning, dimly beginning, to understand him. He hesitated. His generous nature shrank from hurting her.

"Go on," she said, with an effort.

"Try not to be angry with me, Miss Silvester. Geoffrey and I are old friends. Geoffrey knows he can trust me—"

"Trust you?" she interposed. "Stop!"

Arnold waited. She went on, speaking to herself, not to him:

"When I was in the other room I asked if Geoffrey was there. And this man answered for him." She sprang forward with a cry of horror.

"Has he told you—"

"For God's sake, read his letter!"

She violently pushed back the hand with which Arnold once more offered the letter. "You don't look at me! He *has* told you!"

"Read his letter," persisted Arnold. "In justice to him, if you won't in justice to me."

The situation was too painful to be endured. Arnold looked at her, this time, with a man's resolution in his eyes—spoke to her, this time, with a man's resolution in his voice. She took the letter.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, with a

sudden humiliation of tone and manner, inexpressibly shocking, inexpressibly pitiable to see. "I understand my position at last. I am a woman doubly betrayed. Please to excuse what I said to you just now, when I supposed myself to have some claim on your respect. Perhaps you will grant me your pity? I can ask for nothing more."

Arnold was silent. Words were useless in the face of such utter self-abandonment as this. Any man living—even Geoffrey himself—must have felt for her at that moment.

She looked for the first time at the letter. She opened it on the wrong side. "My own letter!" she said to herself. "In the hands of another man!"

"Look at the last page," said Arnold.

She turned to the last page, and read the hurried penciled lines. "Villain! villain! villain!" At the third repetition of the word, she crushed the letter in the palm of her hand, and flung it from her to the other end of the room. The instant after the fire that had flamed up in her died out. Feebly and slowly she reached out her hand to the nearest chair, and sat down in it with her back to Arnold. "He has deserted me!" was all she said. The words fell low and quiet on the silence: they were the utterance of an immeasurable despair.

"You are wrong!" exclaimed Arnold. "Indeed, indeed you are wrong! It's no excuse—it's the truth. I was present when the message came about his father."

She never heeded him, and never moved. She only repeated the words:

“He has deserted me!”

“Don’t take it in that way!” pleaded Arnold —“pray don’t! It’s dreadful to hear you; it is, indeed. I am sure he has *not* deserted you.” There was no answer; no sign that she heard him: she sat there, struck to stone. It was impossible to call the landlady in at such a moment as this. In despair of knowing how else to rouse her, Arnold drew a chair to her side and patted her timidly on the shoulder. “Come!” he said, in his single-hearted, boyish way—“cheer up a little!”

She slowly turned her head, and looked at him with a dull surprise.

“Didn’t you say he had told you everything?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Don’t you despise a woman like me?”

Arnold’s heart went back, at that dreadful question, to the one woman who was eternally sacred to him—to the woman from whose bosom he had drawn the breath of life.

“Does the man live,” he said, “who can think of his mother—and despise women?”

That answer set the prisoned misery in her free. She gave him her hand—she faintly thanked him. The merciful tears came to her at last.

Arnold rose and turned away to the window in despair. “I mean well,” he said. “And yet I only distress her!”



She heard him, and struggled to compose herself. "No," she answered, "you comfort me. Don't mind my crying—I'm the better for it." She looked round at him gratefully. "I won't distress you, Mr. Brinkworth. I ought to thank you—and I do. Come back, or I shall think you are angry with me." Arnold went back to her. She gave him her hand once more. "One doesn't understand people all at once," she said simply. "I thought you were like other men—I didn't know till to-day how kind you could be. Did you walk here?" she added, suddenly, with an effort to change the subject. "Are you tired? I have not been kindly received at this place—but I'm sure I may offer you whatever the inn affords."

It was impossible not to feel for her—it was impossible not to be interested in her. Arnold's honest longing to help her expressed itself a little too openly when he spoke next. "All I want, Miss Silvester, is to be of some service to you, if I can," he said. "Is there anything I can do to make your position here more comfortable? You will stay at this place, won't you? Geoffrey wishes it."

She shuddered, and looked away. "Yes! yes!" she answered, hurriedly.

"You will hear from Geoffrey," Arnold went on, "to-morrow or next day. I know he means to write."

"For Heaven's sake, don't speak of him any more!" she cried out. "How do you think I can look you in the face—" Her cheeks flushed

deep, and her eyes rested on him with a momentary firmness. "Mind this! I am his wife, if promises can make me his wife! He has pledged his word to me by all that is sacred!" She checked herself impatiently. "What am I saying? What interest can *you* have in this miserable state of things? Don't let us talk of it! I have something else to say to you. Let us go back to my troubles here. Did you see the landlady when you came in?"

"No. I only saw the waiter."

"The landlady has made some absurd difficulty about letting me have these rooms because I came here alone."

"She won't make any difficulty now," said Arnold. "I have settled that."

"*You!*"

Arnold smiled. After what had passed, it was an indescribable relief to him to see the humorous side of his own position at the inn.

"Certainly," he answered. "When I asked for the lady who had arrived here alone this afternoon—"

"Yes."

"I was told, in your interests, to ask for her as my wife."

Anne looked at him—in alarm as well as in surprise.

"You asked for me as your wife?" she repeated.

"Yes. I haven't done wrong—have I? As I understood it, there was no alternative. Geoffrey told me you had settled with him to present

yourself here as a married lady, whose husband was coming to join her."

"I thought of *him* when I said that. I never thought of *you*."

"Natural enough. Still, it comes to the same thing (doesn't it?) with the people of this house."

"I don't understand you."

"I will try and explain myself a little better. Geoffrey said your position here depended on my asking for you at the door (as *he* would have asked for you if he had come) in the character of your husband."

"He had no right to say that."

"No right? After what you have told me of the landlady, just think what might have happened if he had *not* said it! I haven't had much experience myself of these things. But—allow me to ask—wouldn't it have been a little awkward (at my age) if I had come here and inquired for you as a friend? Don't you think, in that case, the landlady might have made some additional difficulty about letting you have the rooms?"

It was beyond dispute that the landlady would have refused to let the rooms at all. It was equally plain that the deception which Arnold had practiced on the people of the inn was a deception which Anne had herself rendered necessary, in her own interests. She was not to blame; it was clearly impossible for her to have foreseen such an event as Geoffrey's departure for London. Still, she felt an uneasy sense of responsibility—a vague dread of what might

happen next. She sat nervously twisting her handkerchief in her lap, and made no answer.

"Don't suppose I object to this little stratagem," Arnold went on. "I am serving my old friend, and I am helping the lady who is soon to be his wife."

Anne rose abruptly to her feet, and amazed him by a very unexpected question.

"Mr. Brinkworth," she said, "forgive me the rudeness of something I am about to say to you. When are you going away?"

Arnold burst out laughing. "When I am quite sure I can do nothing more to assist you," he answered.

"Pray don't think of *me* any longer."

"In your situation! who else am I to think of?"

Anne laid her hand earnestly on his arm, and answered:

"Blanche!"

"Blanche?" repeated Arnold, utterly at a loss to understand her.

"Yes—Blanche. She found time to tell me what had passed between you this morning before I left Windygates. I know you have made her an offer. I know you are engaged to be married to her."

Arnold was delighted to hear it. He had been merely unwilling to leave her thus far. He was absolutely determined to stay with her now.

"Don't expect me to go after that!" he said. "Come and sit down again, and let's talk about Blanche."

Anne declined impatiently, by a gesture. Arnold was too deeply interested in the new topic to take any notice of it. "You know all about her habits and her tastes," he went on, "and what she likes, and what she dislikes. It's most important that I should talk to you about her. When we are husband and wife, Blanche is to have all her own way in everything. That's my idea of the Whole Duty of Man—when Man is married. You are still standing? Let me give you a chair."

It was cruel—under other circumstances it would have been impossible—to disappoint him. But the vague fear of consequences which had taken possession of Anne was not to be trifled with. She had no clear conception of the risk (and it is to be added, in justice to Geoffrey, that *he* had no clear conception of the risk) on which Arnold had unconsciously ventured, in undertaking his errand to the inn. Neither of them had any adequate idea (few people have) of the infamous absence of all needful warning, of all decent precaution and restraint, which makes the marriage law of Scotland a trap to catch unmarried men and women, to this day. But, while Geoffrey's mind was incapable of looking beyond the present emergency, Anne's finer intelligence told her that a country which offered such facilities for private marriage as the facilities of which she had proposed to take advantage in her own case, was not a country in which a man could act as Arnold had acted, without danger of some serious embarrassment

following as the possible result. With this motive to animate her, she resolutely declined to take the offered chair, or to enter into the proposed conversation.

"Whatever we have to say about Blanche, Mr. Brinkworth, must be said at some fitter time. I beg you will leave me."

"Leave you!"

"Yes. Leave me to the solitude that is best for me, and to the sorrow that I have deserved. Thank you—and good-by."

Arnold made no attempt to disguise his disappointment and surprise.

"If I must go, I must," he said. "But why are you in such a hurry?"

"I don't want you to call me your wife again before the people of this inn."

"Is *that* all? What on earth are you afraid of?"

She was unable fully to realize her own apprehensions. She was doubly unable to express them in words. In her anxiety to produce some reason which might prevail on him to go, she drifted back into that very conversation about Blanche into which she had declined to enter but the moment before.

"I have reasons for being afraid," she said. "One that I can't give; and one that I can. Suppose Blanche heard of what you have done? The longer you stay here—the more people you see—the more chance there is that she *might* hear of it."

"And what if she did?" asked Arnold, in his

own straightforward way. "Do you think she would be angry with me for making myself useful to *you*?"

"Yes," rejoined Anne, sharply, "if she was jealous of me."

Arnold's unlimited belief in Blanche expressed itself, without the slightest compromise, in two words: "That's impossible!"

Anxious as she was, miserable as she was, a faint smile flitted over Anne's face.

"Sir Patrick would tell you, Mr. Brinkworth, that nothing is impossible where women are concerned." She dropped her momentary lightness of tone, and went on as earnestly as ever. "You can't put yourself in Blanche's place—I can. Once more, I beg you to go. I don't like your coming here in this way! I don't like it at all!"

She held out her hand to take leave. At the same moment there was a loud knock at the door of the room.

Anne sank into the chair at her side, and uttered a faint cry of alarm. Arnold, perfectly impenetrable to all sense of his position, asked what there was to frighten her—and answered the knock in the two customary words,

"Come in!"

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## CHAPTER THE TENTH.

MR. BISHOPRIGGS.

THE knock at the door was repeated—a louder knock than before.



"Are you deaf?" shouted Arnold.

The door opened, little by little, an inch at a time. Mr. Bishopriggs appeared mysteriously, with the cloth for dinner over his arm, and with his second in command behind him, bearing "the furnishing of the table" (as it was called at Craig Fernie) on a tray.

"What the deuce were you waiting for?" asked Arnold. "I told you to come in."

"And *I* tauld *you*," answered Mr. Bishopriggs, "that I wadna come in without knocking first. Eh, man!" he went on, dismissing his second in command, and laying the cloth with his own venerable hands, "d'ye think I've lived in this hottle in blinded eegnorance of hoo young married couples pass the time when they're left to themselves? Twa knocks at the door—and an unco trouble in opening it, after that—is joost the least ye can do for them! Whar' do ye think, noo, I'll set the places for you and your leddy there?"

Anne walked away to the window in undisguised disgust. Arnold found Mr. Bishopriggs to be quite irresistible. He answered, humoring the joke,

"One at the top and one at the bottom of the table, I suppose?"

"One at tap and one at bottom?" repeated Mr. Bishopriggs, in high disdain. "De'il a bit of it! Baith yer chairs as close together as chairs can be. Hech! hech!—haven't I caught 'em, after goodness knows hoo many preleeminary knocks at the door, dining on their husbands'

knees, and steemulating a man's appetite by feeding him at the fork's end like a child? Eh!" sighed the sage of Craig Fernie, "it's a short life wi' that nuptial business, and a merry one! A month for yer billin' and cooin'; and a' the rest o' yer days for wondering ye were ever such a fule, and wishing it was a' to be done ower again.—Ye'll be for a bottle o' sherry wine, nae doot? and a drap toddy afterward, to do yer digestin' on?"

Arnold nodded—and then, in obedience to a signal from Anne, joined her at the window. Mr. Bishopriggs looked after them attentively—observed that they were talking in whispers—and approved of that proceeding, as representing another of the established customs of young married couples at inns, in the presence of third persons appointed to wait on them.

"Ay! ay!" he said, looking over his shoulder at Arnold, "gae to your deerie! gae to your deerie! and leave a' the solid business o' life to Me. Ye've Screepture warrant for it. A man maun leave fether and mother (I'm yer fether) and cleave to his wife. My certie! 'cleave' is a strong word—there's nae sort o' doot aboot it, when it comes to 'cleaving!'" He wagged his head thoughtfully, and walked to the side-table in a corner, to cut the bread.

As he took up the knife, his one wary eye detected a morsel of crumpled paper, lying lost between the table and the wall. It was the letter from Geoffrey, which Anne had flung from her, in the first indignation of reading it—and

which neither she nor Arnold had thought of since.

“What’s that I see yonder?” muttered Mr. Bishopriggs, under his breath. “Mair litter in the room, after I’ve doosted and tidied it wi’ my ain hands!”

He picked up the crumpled paper, and partly opened it. “Eh! what’s here? Writing on it in ink? and writing on it in pencil? Who may this belong to?” He looked round cautiously toward Arnold and Anne. They were both still talking in whispers, and both standing with their backs to him, looking out of the window. “Here it is, clean forgotten and dune with!” thought Mr. Bishopriggs. “Noo what would a fule do, if he fund this? A fule wad light his pipe wi’ it, and then wonder whether he wadna ha’ dune better to read it first. And what wad a wise man do, in a seemilar position?” He practically answered that question by putting the letter into his pocket. It might be worth keeping, or it might not; five minutes’ private examination of it would decide the alternative, at the first convenient opportunity. “Am gaun’ to breeng the dinner in!” he called out to Arnold. “And, mind ye, there’s nae knocking at the door possible, when I’ve got the tray in baith my hands, and, mair’s the pity, the gout in baith my feet.” With that friendly warning, Mr. Bishopriggs went his way to the regions of the kitchen.

Arnold continued his conversation with Anne, in terms which showed that the question of his leaving the inn had been the question once more

discussed between them while they were standing at the window.

"You see we can't help it," he said. "The waiter has gone to bring the dinner in. What will they think in the house if I go away already, and leave 'my wife' to dine alone?"

It was so plainly necessary to keep up appearances for the present, that there was nothing more to be said. Arnold was committing a serious imprudence—and yet, on this occasion, Arnold was right. Anne's annoyance at feeling that conclusion forced on her produced the first betrayal of impatience which she had shown yet. She left Arnold at the window, and flung herself on the sofa. "A curse seems to follow me!" she thought bitterly. "This will end ill—and I shall be answerable for it!"

In the meantime Mr. Bishopriggs had found the dinner in the kitchen, ready, and waiting for him. Instead of at once taking the tray on which it was placed into the sitting-room, he conveyed it privately into his own pantry, and shut the door.

"Lie ye there, my freend, till the spare moment comes—and I'll look at ye again," he said, putting the letter away carefully in the dresser-drawer. "Noo about the dinner o' they twa turtle-doves in the parlor?" he continued, directing his attention to the dinner-tray. "I maun joost see that the cook's dune her duty—the creatures are no' capable o' decidin' that knotty point for their ain selves." He took off one of the covers, and picked bits, here and there, out of

the dish with the fork. "Eh! eh! the collops are no' that bad!" He took off another cover, and shook his head in solemn doubt. "Here's the green meat. I doot green meat's windy diet for a man at my time o' life!" He put the cover on again, and tried the next dish. "The fesh? What the de'il does the woman fry the trout for? Boil it next time, ye betch, wi' a pinch o' saut and a spunefu' o' vinegar." He drew the cork from a bottle of sherry, and decanted the wine. "The sherry-wine?" he said in tones of deep feeling, holding the decanter up to the light. "Hoo do I know but what it may be corkit? I maun taste and try. It's on my conscience, as an honest man, to taste and try." He forthwith relieved his conscience—copiously. There was a vacant space, of no inconsiderable dimensions, left in the decanter. Mr. Bishopriggs gravely filled it up from the water-bottle. "Eh! it's joost addin' ten years to the age o' the wine. The turtle-doves will be nane the waur—and I mysel' am a glass o' sherry the better. Praise Providence for a' its maircies!" Having relieved himself of that devout aspiration, he took up the tray again, and decided on letting the turtle-doves have their dinner.

The conversation in the parlor (dropped for the moment) had been renewed, in the absence of Mr. Bishopriggs. Too restless to remain long in one place, Anne had risen again from the sofa, and had rejoined Arnold at the window.

"Where do your friends at Lady Lundie's believe you to be now?" she asked, abruptly.

"I am believed," replied Arnold, "to be meeting my tenants, and taking possession of my estate."

"How are you to get to your estate to-night?"

"By railway, I suppose. By-the-by, what excuse am I to make for going away after dinner? We are sure to have the landlady in here before long. What will she say to my going off by myself to the train, and leaving 'my wife' behind me?"

"Mr. Brinkworth! that joke—if it *is* a joke—is worn out!"

"I beg your pardon," said Arnold.

"You may leave your excuse to me," pursued Anne. "Do you go by the up train, or the down?"

"By the up train."

The door opened suddenly; and Mr. Bishopriggs appeared with the dinner. Anne nervously separated herself from Arnold. The one available eye of Mr. Bishopriggs followed her reproachfully, as he put the dishes on the table.

"I warned ye baith, it was a clean impossibility to knock at the door this time. Don't blame me, young madam—don't blame *me*!"

"Where will you sit?" asked Arnold, by way of diverting Anne's attention from the familiarities of Father Bishopriggs.

"Anywhere!" she answered, impatiently; snatching up a chair, and placing it at the bottom of the table.

Mr. Bishopriggs politely, but firmly, put the chair back again in its place.





“FOR WHAT YERE GAUN’ TO RECEIVE, MAY YE BAITH BE TRULY THANKFUL!”

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 181.





"Lord's sake! what are ye doin'? It's clean contrary to a' the laws and customs o' the honeymoon, to sit as far away from your husband as that!"

He waved his persuasive napkin to one of the two chairs placed close together at the table. Arnold interfered once more, and prevented another outbreak of impatience from Anne.

"What does it matter?" he said. "Let the man have his way."

"Get it over as soon as you can," she returned. "I can't, and won't, bear it much longer."

They took their places at the table, with Father Bishopriggs behind them, in the mixed character of major-domo and guardian angel.

"Here's the trout!" he cried, taking the cover off with a flourish. "Half an hour since, he was loupin' in the water. There he lies noo, fried in the dish. An emblem o' human life for ye! When ye can spare any leisure time from yer twa selves, meditate on that."

Arnold took up the spoon, to give Anne one of the trout. Mr. Bishopriggs clapped the cover on the dish again, with a countenance expressive of devout horror.

"Is there naebody gaun' to say grace?" he asked.

"Come! come!" said Arnold. "The fish is getting cold."

Mr. Bishopriggs piously closed his available eye and held the cover firmly on the dish. "For what ye're gaun' to receive, may ye baith be

truly thankful!" He opened his available eye, and whipped the cover off again.

"My conscience is easy noo. Fall to! Fall to!"

"Send him away!" said Anne. "His familiarity is beyond all endurance."

"You needn't wait," said Arnold.

"Eh! but I'm here to wait," objected Mr. Bishopriggs. "What's the use o' my gaun' away, when ye'll want me anon to change the plates for ye?" He considered for a moment—privately consulting his experience—and arrived at a satisfactory conclusion as to Arnold's motive for wanting to get rid of him. "Tak' her on yer knee," he whispered in Arnold's ear, "as soon as ye like! Feed him at the fork's end," he added to Anne, "whenever ye please! I'll think of something else, and look out at the proaspect." He winked—and went to the window.

"Come! come!" said Arnold to Anne. "There's a comic side to all this. Try and see it as I do."

Mr. Bishopriggs returned from the window, and announced the appearance of a new element of embarrassment in the situation at the inn.

"My certie!" he said, "it's weel ye cam' when ye did. It's ill getting to this hottle in a storm."

Anne started, and looked round at him. "A storm coming!" she exclaimed.

"Eh! ye're well hoosed here—ye needn't mind it. There's the cloud down the valley," he added, pointing out of the window, "coming up one way, when the wind's blawing the other.

The storm's brewing, my leddy, when ye see that!"

There was another knock at the door. As Arnold had predicted, the landlady made her appearance on the scene.

"I ha' just lookit in, sir," said Mrs. Inchbare, addressing herself exclusively to Arnold, "to see ye've got what ye want."

"Oh! you are the landlady? Very nice, ma'am—very nice."

Mistress Inchbare had her own private motive for entering the room, and came to it without further preface.

"Ye'll excuse me, sir," she proceeded. "I wasna in the way when ye cam' here, or I suld ha' made bauld to ask ye the question which I maun e'en ask noo. Am I to understand that ye hire these rooms for yersel', and this leddy here—yer wife?"

Anne raised her head to speak. Arnold pressed her hand warningly, under the table, and silenced her.

"Certainly," he said. "I take the rooms for myself, and this lady here—my wife!"

Anne made a second attempt to speak.

"This gentleman—" she began.

Arnold stopped her for the second time.

"This gentleman?" repeated Mrs. Inchbare, with a broad stare of surprise. "I'm only a puir woman, my leddy—d'ye mean yer husband here?"

Arnold's warning hand touched Anne's for the third time. Mistress Inchbare's eyes remained

fixed on her in merciless inquiry. To have given utterance to the contradiction which trembled on her lips would have been to involve Arnold (after all that he had sacrificed for her) in the scandal which would inevitably follow—a scandal which would be talked of in the neighborhood, and which might find its way to Blanche's ears. White and cold, her eyes never moving from the table, she accepted the landlady's implied correction, and faintly repeated the words: "My husband."

Mistress Inchbare drew a breath of virtuous relief, and waited for what Anne had to say next. Arnold came considerably to the rescue and got her out of the room.

"Never mind," he said to Anne; "I know what it is, and I'll see about it.—She's always like this, ma'am, when a storm's coming," he went on, turning to the landlady. "No, thank you—I know how to manage her. We'll send to you, if we want your assistance."

"At yer ain pleasure, sir," answered Mistress Inchbare. She turned, and apologized to Anne (under protest), with a stiff courtesy. "No offense, my leddy! Ye'll remember that ye cam' here alane, and that the hottle has its ain gude name to keep up." Having once more vindicated "the hottle," she made the long-desired move to the door, and left the room.

"I'm faint!" Anne whispered. "Give me some water."

There was no water on the table. Arnold ordered it of Mr. Bishopriggs—who had remained

passive in the background (a model of discreet attention) as long as the mistress was in the room.

“Mr. Brinkworth!” said Anne, when they were alone, “you are acting with inexcusable rashness. That woman’s question was an impertinence. Why did you answer it? Why did you force me—?”

She stopped, unable to finish the sentence. Arnold insisted on her drinking a glass of wine—and then defended himself with the patient consideration for her which he had shown from the first.

“Why didn’t I have the inn door shut in your face”—he asked, good-humoredly—“with a storm coming on, and without a place in which you can take refuge? No, no, Miss Silvester! I don’t presume to blame you for any scruples you may feel—but scruples are sadly out of place with such a woman as that landlady. I am responsible for your safety to Geoffrey; and Geoffrey expects to find you here. Let’s change the subject. The water is a long time coming. Try another glass of wine. No? Well—here is Blanche’s health” (he took some of the wine himself), “in the weakest sherry I ever drank in my life.” As he set down his glass, Mr. Bishopriggs came in with the water. Arnold hailed him satirically. “Well, have you got the water? or have you used it all for the sherry?”

Mr. Bishopriggs stopped in the middle of the room, thunderstruck at the aspersion cast on the wine.



"Is that the way ye talk of the auldest bottle o' sherry-wine in Scotland?" he asked gravely. "What's the warld coming to? The new generation's a foot beyond my fathoming. The maircies o' Providence, as shown to man in the choicest veentages o' Spain, are clean thrown away on 'em."

"Have you brought the water?"

"I ha' brought the water—and mair than the water. I ha' brought ye news from ootside. There's a company o' gentlemen on horseback, joost cantering by to what they ca' the shootin' cottage, a mile from this."

"Well, and what have we got to do with it?"

"Bide a wee! There's ane o' them has drawn bridle at the hottle, and he's speerin' after the leddy that cam' here alane. The leddy's your leddy, as sure as saxpence. I doot," said Mr. Bishopriggs, walking away to the window, "*that's* what's ye've got to do with it."

Arnold looked at Anne.

"Do you expect anybody?"

"Is it Geoffrey?"

"Impossible. Geoffrey is on his way to London."

"There he is, anyway," resumed Mr. Bishopriggs, at the window. "He's loupin' down from his horse. He's turning this way. Lord save us!" he exclaimed, with a start of consternation, "what do I see? That incarnate deevil, Sir Paitrick himself!"

Arnold sprang to his feet,

"Do you mean Sir Patrick Lundie?"

Anne ran to the window.

"It *is* Sir Patrick!" she said. "Hide yourself before he comes in!"

"Hide myself?"

"What will he think if he sees you with *me*?"

He was Blanche's guardian, and he believed Arnold to be at that moment visiting his new property. What he would think was not difficult to foresee. Arnold turned for help to Mr. Bishopriggs.

"Where can I go?"

Mr. Bishopriggs pointed to the bedroom door.

"Whar' can ye go? There's the nuptial chamber!"

"Impossible!"

Mr. Bishopriggs expressed the utmost extremity of human amazement by a long whistle, on one note.

"Whew! Is that the way ye talk o' the nuptial chamber already?"

"Find me some other place—I'll make it worth your while."

"Eh! there's my paintry! I trow that's some other place; and the door's at the end o' the passage."

Arnold hurried out. Mr. Bishopriggs—evidently under the impression that the case before him was a case of elopement, with Sir Patrick mixed up in it in the capacity of guardian—addressed himself, in friendly confidence, to Anne.

"My certie, mistress! it's ill wark deceivin' Sir Paitrick, if that's what ye've dune. Ye must

know, I was ance a bit clerk body in his chambers at Embrò—”

The voice of Mistress Inchbare, calling for the head-waiter, rose shrill and imperative from the regions of the bar. Mr. Bishopriggs disappeared. Anne remained, standing helpless by the window. It was plain by this time that the place of her retreat had been discovered at Windygates. The one doubt to decide, now, was whether it would be wise or not to receive Sir Patrick, for the purpose of discovering whether he came as friend or enemy to the inn.

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## CHAPTER THE ELEVENTH.

### SIR PATRICK.

THE doubt was practically decided before Anne had determined what to do. She was still at the window, when the sitting-room door was thrown open, and Sir Patrick appeared, obsequiously shown in by Mr. Bishopriggs.

“Ye’re kindly welcome, Sir Paitrick. Hech, sirs! the sight of you is gude for sair eyne.”

Sir Patrick turned and looked at Mr. Bishopriggs—as he might have looked at some troublesome insect which he had driven out of the window, and which had returned on him again.

“What, you scoundrel! have you drifted into an honest employment at last?”

Mr. Bishopriggs rubbed his hands cheerfully,

and took his tone from his superior, with supple readiness.

"Ye're always in the right of it, Sir Paitrick! Wut, raal wut in that aboot the honest employment, and me drifting into it. Lord's sake, sir, hoo well ye wear!"

Dismissing Mr. Bishopriggs by a sign, Sir Patrick advanced to Anne.

"I am committing an intrusion, madam, which must, I am afraid, appear unpardonable in your eyes," he said. "May I hope you will excuse me when I have made you acquainted with my motive?"

He spoke with scrupulous politeness. His knowledge of Anne was of the slightest possible kind. Like other men, he had felt the attraction of her unaffected grace and gentleness on the few occasions when he had been in her company—and that was all. If he had belonged to the present generation he would, under the circumstances, have fallen into one of the besetting sins of England in these days—the tendency (to borrow an illustration from the stage) to "strike an attitude" in presence of a social emergency. A man of the present period, in Sir Patrick's position, would have struck an attitude of (what is called) chivalrous respect; and would have addressed Anne in a tone of ready-made sympathy, which it was simply impossible for a stranger really to feel. Sir Patrick affected nothing of the sort. One of the besetting sins of *his* time was the habitual concealment of our better selves—upon the whole, a far less dangerous national

error than the habitual advertisement of our better selves, which has become the practice, publicly and privately, of society in this age. Sir Patrick assumed, if anything, less sympathy on this occasion than he really felt. Courteous to all women, he was as courteous as usual to Anne—and no more.

“I am quite at a loss, sir, to know what brings you to this place. The servant here informs me that you are one of a party of gentlemen who have just passed by the inn, and who have all gone on except yourself.”

In those guarded terms Anne opened the interview with the unwelcome visitor, on her side.

Sir Patrick admitted the fact, without betraying the slightest embarrassment.

“The servant is quite right,” he said. “I am one of the party. And I have purposely allowed them to go on to the keeper’s cottage without me. Having admitted this, may I count on receiving your permission to explain the motive of my visit?”

Necessarily suspicious of him, as coming from Windygates, Anne answered in few and formal words, as coldly as before.

“Explain it, Sir Patrick, if you please, as briefly as possible.”

Sir Patrick bowed. He was not in the least offended; he was even (if the confession may be made without degrading him in the public estimation) privately amused. Conscious of having honestly presented himself at the inn in Anne’s interests, as well as in the interests of the ladies

at Windygates, it appealed to his sense of humor to find himself kept at arm's-length by the very woman whom he had come to benefit. The temptation was strong on him to treat his errand from his own whimsical point of view. He gravely took out his watch, and noted the time to a second, before he spoke again.

"I have an event to relate in which you are interested," he said; "and I have two messages to deliver, which I hope you will not object to receive. The event I undertake to describe in one minute. The messages I promise to dispose of in two minutes more. Total duration of this intrusion on your time—three minutes."

He placed a chair for Anne, and waited until she had permitted him, by a sign, to take a second chair for himself.

"We will begin with the event," he resumed. "Your arrival at this place is no secret at Windygates. You were seen on the foot-road to Craig Fernie by one of the female servants. And the inference naturally drawn is, that you were on your way to the inn. It may be important for you to know this; and I have taken the liberty of mentioning it accordingly." He consulted his watch. "Event related. Time one minute."

He had excited her curiosity, to begin with. "Which of the women saw me?" she asked, impulsively.

Sir Patrick (watch in hand) declined to prolong the interview by answering any incidental inquiries which might arise in the course of it.

"Pardon me," he rejoined; "I am pledged to

occupy three minutes only. I have no room for the woman. With your kind permission, I will get on to the messages next."

Anne remained silent. Sir Patrick went on.

"First message: 'Lady Lundie's compliments to her stepdaughter's late governess—with whose married name she is not acquainted. Lady Lundie regrets to say that Sir Patrick, as head of the family, has threatened to return to Edinburgh unless she consents to be guided by his advice in the course she pursues with the late governess. Lady Lundie, accordingly, foregoes her intention of calling at the Craig Fernie inn, to express her sentiments and make her inquiries in person, and commits to Sir Patrick the duty of expressing her sentiments; reserving to herself the right of making her inquiries at the next convenient opportunity. Through the medium of her brother-in-law, she begs to inform the late governess that all intercourse is at an end between them, and that she declines to act as reference in case of future emergency.'—Message textually correct. Expressive of Lady Lundie's view of your sudden departure from the house. Time, two minutes."

Anne's color rose. Anne's pride was up in arms on the spot.

"The impertinence of Lady Lundie's message is no more than I should have expected from her," she said. "I am only surprised at Sir Patrick's delivering it."

"Sir Patrick's motives will appear presently," rejoined the incorrigible old gentleman. "Sec-



ond message: 'Blanche's fondest love. Is dying to be acquainted with Anne's husband, and to be informed of Anne's married name. Feels indescribable anxiety and apprehension on Anne's account. Insists on hearing from Anne immediately. Longs, as she never longed for anything yet, to order her pony-chaise and drive full gallop to the inn. Yields, under irresistible pressure, to the exertion of her guardian's authority, and commits the expression of her feelings to Sir Patrick, who is a born tyrant, and doesn't in the least mind breaking other people's hearts.' Sir Patrick (speaking for himself) places his sister-in-law's view and his niece's view, side by side, before the lady whom he has now the honor of addressing, and on whose confidence he is especially careful not to intrude. Reminds the lady that his influence at Windygates, however strenuously he may exert it, is not likely to last forever. Requests her to consider whether his sister-in-law's view and his niece's view, in collision, may not lead to very undesirable domestic results; and leaves her to take the course which seems best to herself under those circumstances.—Second message delivered textually. Time, three minutes. A storm coming on. A quarter of an hour's ride from here to the shooting-cottage. Madam, I wish you good-evening."

He bowed lower than ever—and, without a word more, quietly left the room.

Anne's first impulse was (excusably enough, poor soul) an impulse of resentment.

"Thank you, Sir Patrick!" she said, with a

bitter look at the closing door. "The sympathy of society with a friendless woman could hardly have been expressed in a more amusing way!"

The little irritation of the moment passed off with the moment. Anne's own intelligence and good sense showed her the position in its truer light.

She recognized in Sir Patrick's abrupt departure Sir Patrick's considerate resolution to spare her from entering into any details on the subject of her position at the inn. He had given her a friendly warning; and he had delicately left her to decide for herself as to the assistance which she might render him in maintaining tranquillity at Windygates. She went at once to a side-table in the room, on which writing materials were placed, and sat down to write to Blanche.

"I can do nothing with Lady Lundie," she thought. "But I have more influence than anybody else over Blanche; and I can prevent the collision between them which Sir Patrick dreads."

She began the letter. "My dearest Blanche, I have seen Sir Patrick, and he has given me your message. I will set your mind at ease about me as soon as I can. But, before I say anything else, let me entreat you, as the greatest favor you can do to your sister and your friend, not to enter into any disputes about me with Lady Lundie, and not to commit the imprudence—the useless imprudence, my love—of coming here." She stopped—the paper swam before her

eyes. "My own darling!" she thought, "who could have foreseen that I should ever shrink from the thought of seeing *you*?" She sighed, and dipped the pen in the ink, and went on with the letter.

The sky darkened rapidly as the evening fell. The wind swept in fainter and fainter gusts across the dreary moor. Far and wide over the face of Nature the stillness was fast falling which tells of a coming storm.

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## CHAPTER THE TWELFTH.

### ARNOLD.

MEANWHILE Arnold remained shut up in the head-waiter's pantry, chafing secretly at the position forced upon him.

He was, for the first time in his life, in hiding from another person, and that person a man. Twice—stung to it by the inevitable loss of self-respect which his situation occasioned—he had gone to the door, determined to face Sir Patrick boldly; and twice he had abandoned the idea, in mercy to Anne. It would have been impossible for him to set himself right with Blanche's guardian without betraying the unhappy woman whose secret he was bound in honor to keep. "I wish to Heaven I had never come here!" was the useless aspiration that escaped him, as he doggedly seated himself on the dresser to wait till Sir Patrick's departure set him free.

After an interval—not by any means the long interval which he had anticipated—his solitude was enlivened by the appearance of Father Bishopriggs.

“Well,” cried Arnold, jumping off the dresser, “is the coast clear?”

There were occasions when Mr. Bishopriggs became, on a sudden, unexpectedly hard of hearing. This was one of them.

“Hoo do ye find the paintry?” he asked, without paying the slightest attention to Arnold’s question. “Snug and private? A Patmos in the weelderness, as ye may say!”

His one available eye, which had begun by looking at Arnold’s face, dropped slowly downward, and fixed itself, in mute but eloquent expectation, on Arnold’s waistcoat pocket.

“I undestand!” said Arnold. “I promised to pay you for the Patmos—eh? There you are!”

Mr. Bishopriggs pocketed the money with a dreary smile and a sympathetic shake of the head. Other waiters would have returned thanks. The sage of Craig Fernie returned a few brief remarks instead. Admirable in many things, Father Bishopriggs was especially great at drawing a moral. He drew a moral on this occasion from his own gratuity.

“There I am—as ye say. Mercy presairve us! ye need the siller at every turn, when there’s a woman at yer heels. It’s an awfu’ reflection—ye canna hae anything to do wi’ the sex they ca’ the opposite sex without its being an expense to ye. There’s this young leddy o’ yours,

I doot she'll ha' been an expense to ye from the first. When you were coortin' her ye did it, I'll go bail, wi' the open hand. Presents and keepsakes, flowers and jewelry, and little dogues. Sair expenses all of them!"

"Hang your reflections! Has Sir Patrick left the inn?"

The reflections of Mr. Bishopriggs declined to be disposed of in anything approaching to a summary way. On they flowed from their parent source, as slowly and as smoothly as ever!

"Noo ye're married to her, there's her bonnets and goons and under-clothin'—her ribbons, laces, furbelows and fallals. A sair expense again!"

"What is the expense of cutting your reflections short, Mr. Bishopriggs?"

"Thirdly, and lastly, if ye canna agree wi' her as time gaes on—if there's incompartibeelity of temper betwixt ye—in short, if ye want a wee bit separation, hech, sirs! ye pet yer hand in yer poaket, and come to an aimicable understandin' wi' her in that way. Or, maybe she takes ye into Court, and pets *her* hand in *your* poaket, and comes to a hoastile understandin' wi' ye there. Show me a woman—and I'll show ye a man not far off wha' has mair expenses on his back than he ever bargained for." Arnold's patience would last no longer—he turned to the door. Mr. Bishopriggs, with equal alacrity on his side, turned to the matter in hand. "Yes, sir! The room is e'en clear o' Sir Paitrick, and the leddy's a'lane, and waitin' for ye."

In a moment more Arnold was back in the sitting-room.

"Well?" he asked, anxiously; "what is it? Bad news from Lady Lundie's?"

Anne closed and directed the letter to Blanche, which she had just completed. "No," she replied. "Nothing to interest *you*."

"What did Sir Patrick want?"

"Only to warn me. They have found out at Windygates that I am here."

"That's awkward, isn't it?"

"Not in the least. I can manage perfectly; I have nothing to fear. Don't think of *me*—think of yourself."

"I am not suspected, am I?"

"Thank Heaven—no! But there is no knowing what may happen if you stay here. Ring the bell at once, and ask the waiter about the trains."

Struck by the unusual obscurity of the sky at that hour of the evening, Arnold went to the window. The rain had come, and was falling heavily. The view on the moor was fast disappearing in mist and darkness.

"Pleasant weather to travel in!" he said.

"The railway!" Anne exclaimed, impatiently. "It's getting late. See about the railway!"

Arnold walked to the fire-place to ring the bell. The railway time-table hanging over it met his eye.

"Here's the information I want," he said to Anne; "if I only knew how to get at it. 'Down'—'Up'—'A.M.'—'P.M.' What a cursed confusion! I believe they do it on purpose."

Anne joined him at the fire-place.

"I understand it—I'll help you. Did you say it was the up train you wanted?"

"Yes."

"What is the name of the station you stop at?"

Arnold told her. She followed the intricate network of lines and figures with her finger—suddenly stopped—looked again to make sure—and turned from the time-table with a face of blank despair. The last train for the day had gone an hour since.

In the silence which followed that discovery, a first flash of lightning passed across the window, and the low roll of thunder sounded the outbreak of the storm.

"What's to be done now?" asked Arnold.

In the face of the storm, Anne answered without hesitation, "You must take a carriage, and drive."

"Drive? They told me it was three-and-twenty miles, by railway, from the station to my place—let alone the distance from this inn to the station."

"What does the distance matter? Mr. Brinkworth, you can't possibly stay here!"

A second flash of lightning crossed the window; the roll of the thunder came nearer. Even Arnold's good temper began to be a little ruffled by Anne's determination to get rid of him. He sat down with the air of a man who had made up his mind not to leave the house.

"Do you hear that?" he asked, as the sound



of the thunder died away grandly, and the hard pattering of the rain on the window became audible once more. "If I ordered horses, do you think they would let me have them, in such weather as this? And, if they did, do you suppose the horses could face it on the moor? No, no, Miss Silvester—I am sorry to be in the way; but the train has gone, and the night and the storm have come. I have no choice but to stay here!"

Anne still maintained her own view, but less resolutely than before. "After what you have told the landlady," she said, "think of the embarrassment, the cruel embarrassment of our position, if you stop at the inn till to-morrow morning!"

"Is that all?" returned Arnold.

Anne looked up at him, quickly and angrily. No! he was quite unconscious of having said anything that could offend her. His rough masculine sense broke its way unconsciously through all the little feminine subtleties and delicacies of his companion, and looked the position practically in the face for what it was worth, and no more. "Where's the embarrassment?" he asked, pointing to the bedroom door. "There's your room, all ready for you. And here's the sofa, in this room, all ready for *me*. If you had seen the places I have slept in at sea—!"

She interrupted him without ceremony. The places he had slept in at sea were of no earthly importance. The one question to consider was the place he was to sleep in that night.

"If you must stay," she rejoined, "can't you get a room in some other part of the house?"

But one last mistake in dealing with her, in her present nervous condition, was left to make—and the innocent Arnold made it. "In some other part of the house?" he repeated, jestingly. "The landlady would be scandalized. Mr. Bishopriggs would never allow it!"

She rose, and stamped her foot impatiently on the floor. "Don't joke!" she exclaimed. "This is no laughing matter." She paced the room excitedly. "I don't like it! I don't like it!"

Arnold looked after her with a stare of boyish wonder.

"What puts you out so?" he asked. "Is it the storm?"

She threw herself on the sofa again. "Yes," she said, shortly; "it's the storm."

Arnold's inexhaustible good-nature was at once roused to activity again.

"Shall we have the candles," he suggested, "and shut the weather out?" She turned irritably on the sofa without replying. "I'll promise to go away the first thing in the morning!" he went on. "Do try and take it easy—and don't be angry with me. Come! come! you wouldn't turn a dog out, Miss Silvester, on such a night as this!"

He was irresistible. The most sensitive woman breathing could not have accused him of failing toward her in any single essential of consideration and respect. He wanted tact, poor fellow—but who could expect him to have

learned that always superficial (and sometimes dangerous) accomplishment in the life he had led at sea? At the sight of his honest, pleading face, Anne recovered possession of her gentler and sweeter self. She made her excuses for her irritability with a grace that enchanted him.

"We'll have a pleasant evening of it yet!" cried Arnold, in his hearty way—and rang the bell.

The bell was hung outside the door of that Patmos in the wilderness—otherwise known as the head-waiter's pantry. Mr. Bishopriggs (employing his brief leisure in the seclusion of his own apartment) had just mixed a glass of the hot and comforting liquor called "toddy" in the language of North Britain, and was just lifting it to his lips, when the summons from Arnold invited him to leave his grog.

"Haud yer screechin' tongue!" cried Mr. Bishopriggs, addressing the bell through the door. "Ye're waur than a woman when ye aince begin!"

The bell—like the woman—went on again. Mr. Bishopriggs, equally pertinacious, went on with his toddy.

"Ay! ay! ye may e'en ring yer heart out—but ye won't part a Scotchman from his glass. It's maybe the end of their dinner they'll be wantin'. Sir Paitrick cam' in at the fair beginning of it, and spoilt the collops, like the dour deevil he is!" The bell rang for the third time. "Ay! ay! ring awa'! I doot yon young gentleman's little better than a belly-god—

there's a scandalous haste to comfort the carnal part o' him in a' this ringin'! He knows naething o' wine," added Mr. Bishopriggs, on whose mind Arnold's discovery of the watered sherry still dwelt unpleasantly.

The lightning quickened, and lighted the sitting-room horribly with its lurid glare; the thunder rolled nearer and nearer over the black gulf of the moor. Arnold had just raised his hand to ring for the fourth time, when the inevitable knock was heard at the door. It was useless to say "come in." The immutable laws of Bishopriggs had decided that a second knock was necessary. Storm or no storm, the second knock came—and then, and not till then, the sage appeared, with the dish of untasted "collops" in his hand.

"Candles!" said Arnold.

Mr. Bishopriggs set the "collops" (in the language of England, minced meat) upon the table, lighted the candles on the mantelpiece, faced about, with the fire of recent toddy flaming in his nose, and waited for further orders, before he went back to his second glass. Anne declined to return to the dinner. Arnold ordered Mr. Bishopriggs to close the shutters, and sat down to dine by himself.

"It looks greasy, and smells greasy," he said to Anne, turning over the collops with a spoon. "I won't be ten minutes dining. Will you have some tea?"

Anne declined again.

Arnold tried her once more. "What shall we do to get through the evening?"

"Do what you like," she answered, resignedly.

Arnold's mind was suddenly illuminated by an idea.

"I have got it!" he exclaimed. "We'll kill the time as our cabin-passengers used to kill it at sea." He looked over his shoulder at Mr. Bishopriggs. "Waiter! bring a pack of cards."

"What's that ye're wantin'?" asked Mr. Bishopriggs, doubting the evidence of his own senses.

"A pack of cards," repeated Arnold.

"Cairds?" echoed Mr. Bishopriggs. "A pack o' cairds? The deevil's allegories in the deevil's own colors—red and black! I wunna execute yer order. For yer ain saul's sake, I wunna do it. Ha' ye lived to your time o' life, and are ye no' awakened yet to the awfu' seenfulness o' gamblin' wi' the cairds?"

"Just as you please," returned Arnold. "You will find me awakened—when I go away—to the awful folly of feeing a waiter."

"Does that mean that ye're bent on the cairds?" asked Mr. Bishopriggs, suddenly betraying signs of worldly anxiety in his look and manner.

"Yes—that means I am bent on the cards."

"I tak' up my testimony against 'em—but I'm no' telling ye that I canna lay my hand on 'em if I like. What do they say in my country? 'Him that will to Coupar, maun to Coupar.' And what do they say in your country? 'Needs

must when the deevil drives.' ” With that excellent reason for turning his back on his own principles, Mr. Bishopriggs shuffled out of the room to fetch the cards.

The dresser-drawer in the pantry contained a choice selection of miscellaneous objects—a pack of cards being among them. In searching for the cards, the wary hand of the head-waiter came in contact with a morsel of crumpled-up paper. He drew it out, and recognized the letter which he had picked up in the sitting-room some hours since.

“Ay! ay! I’ll do weel, I trow, to look at this while my mind’s runnin’ on it,” said Mr. Bishopriggs. “The cairds may e’en find their way to the parlor by other hands than mine.”

Her forthwith sent the cards to Arnold by his second in command, closed the pantry door, and carefully smoothed out the crumpled sheet of paper on which the two letters were written. This done, he trimmed his candle, and began with the letter in ink, which occupied the first three pages of the sheet of note-paper.

It ran thus:

“WINDYGATES HOUSE, *August 12, 1868.*

“GEOFFREY DELAMAYN—I have waited in the hope that you would ride over from your brother’s place and see me—and I have waited in vain. Your conduct to me is cruelty itself; I will bear it no longer. Consider! in your own interests, consider—before you drive the miserable woman who has trusted you to despair.

You have promised me marriage by all that is sacred. I claim your promise. I insist on nothing less than to be what you vowed I should be—what I have waited all this weary time to be—what I *am*, in the sight of Heaven, your wedded wife. Lady Lundie gives a lawn-party here on the 14th. I know you have been asked. I expect you to accept her invitation. If I don't see you, I won't answer for what may happen. My mind is made up to endure this suspense no longer. Oh, Geoffrey, remember the past! Be faithful—be just—to your loving wife,

“ANNE SILVESTER.”

Mr. Bishopriggs paused. His commentary on the correspondence, so far, was simple enough. “Hot words (in ink) from the leddy to the gentleman!” He ran his eye over the second letter, on the fourth page of the paper, and added, cynically, “A trifle caulder (in pencil) from the gentleman to the leddy! The way o’ the warld, sirs! From the time o’ Adam downward, the way o’ the warld!”

The second letter ran thus:

“DEAR ANNE—Just called to London to my father. They have telegraphed him in a bad way. Stop where you are, and I will write you. Trust the bearer. Upon my soul, I’ll keep my promise. Your loving husband that is to be,

“GEOFFREY DELAMAYN.

“WINDYGATES HOUSE, *Aug. 14, 4 P.M.*

“In a mortal hurry. Train starts at 4.30.”



There it ended!

“Who are the parties in the parlor? Is ane o’ them ‘Silvester?’ and t’other ‘Delamayn?’ ” pondered Mr. Bishopriggs, slowly folding the letter up again in its original form. “Hech, sirs! what, being intairpreted, may a’ this mean?”

He mixed himself a second glass of toddy, as an aid to reflection, and sat sipping the liquor, and twisting and turning the letter in his gouty fingers. It was not easy to see his way to the true connection between the lady and the gentleman in the parlor and the two letters now in his own possession. They might be themselves the writers of the letters, or they might be only friends of the writers. Who was to decide?

In the first case, the lady’s object would appear to have been as good as gained; for the two had certainly asserted themselves to be man and wife, in his own presence, and in the presence of the landlady. In the second case, the correspondence so carelessly thrown aside might, for all a stranger knew to the contrary, prove to be of some importance in the future. Acting on this latter view, Mr. Bishopriggs—whose past experience as “a bit clerk body,” in Sir Patrick’s chambers, had made a man of business of him—produced his pen and ink, and indorsed the letter with a brief dated statement of the circumstances under which he had found it. “I’ll do weel to keep the doecument,” he thought to himself. “Wha knows but there’ll be a reward offered for it ane o’ these days? Eh! eh! there

may be the warth o' a fi' pun' note in this to a pair lad like me!"

With that comforting reflection, he drew out a battered tin cash-box from the inner recesses of the drawer, and locked up the stolen correspondence to bide its time.

The storm rose higher and higher as the evening advanced.

In the sitting-room, the state of affairs, perpetually changing, now presented itself under another new aspect.

Arnold had finished his dinner and had sent it away. He had next drawn a side-table up to the sofa on which Anne lay—had shuffled the pack of cards—and was now using all his powers of persuasion to induce her to try one game at *Écarté* with him, by way of diverting her attention from the tumult of the storm. In sheer weariness, she gave up contesting the matter; and, raising herself languidly on the sofa, said she would try to play. "Nothing can make matters worse than they are," she thought, despairingly, as Arnold dealt the cards for her. "Nothing can justify my inflicting my own wretchedness on this kind-hearted boy!"

Two worse players never probably sat down to a game. Anne's attention perpetually wandered; and Anne's companion was, in all human probability, the most incapable card-player in Europe.

Anne turned up the trump—the nine of Diamonds. Arnold looked at his hand—and "pro-

posed.” Anne declined to change the cards. Arnold announced, with undiminished good-humor, that he saw his way clearly, now, to losing the game, and then played his first card—the Queen of Trumps!

Anne took it with the King, and forgot to declare the King. She played the ten of Trumps.

Arnold unexpectedly discovered the eight of Trumps in his hand. “What a pity!” he said, as he played it. “Halloo! you haven’t marked the King! I’ll do it for you. That’s two—no, three—to you. I said I should lose the game. Couldn’t be expected to do anything (could I?) with such a hand as mine. I’ve lost everything, now I’ve lost my trumps. You to play.”

Anne looked at her hand. At the same moment the lightning flashed into the room through the ill-closed shutters; the roar of the thunder burst over the house, and shook it to its foundation. The screaming of some hysterical female tourist, and the barking of a dog, rose shrill from the upper floor of the inn. Anne’s nerves could support it no longer. She flung her cards on the table, and sprang to her feet.

“I can play no more,” she said. “Forgive me—I am quite unequal to it. My head burns! my heart stifles me!”

She began to pace the room again. Aggravated by the effect of the storm on her nerves, her first vague distrust of the false position into which she and Arnold had allowed themselves to drift had strengthened, by this time, into a downright horror of their situation which was

not to be endured. Nothing could justify such a risk as the risk they were now running! They had dined together like married people—and there they were at that moment, shut in together, and passing the evening like man and wife!

“Oh, Mr. Brinkworth!” she pleaded. “Think—for Blanche’s sake, think—is there no way out of this?”

Arnold was quietly collecting the scattered cards.

“Blanche, again?” he said, with the most exasperating composure. “I wonder how she feels in this storm?”

In Anne’s excited state the reply almost maddened her. She turned from Arnold, and hurried to the door.

“I don’t care!” she cried, wildly. “I won’t let this deception go on. I’ll do what I ought to have done before. Come what may of it, I’ll tell the landlady the truth!”

She had opened the door, and was on the point of stepping into the passage—when she stopped, and started violently. Was it possible, in that dreadful weather, that she had actually heard the sound of carriage wheels on the strip of paved road outside the inn?

Yes! others had heard the sound too. The hobbling figure of Mr. Bishopriggs passed her in the passage, making for the house door. The hard voice of the landlady rang through the inn, ejaculating astonishment in broad Scotch. Anne closed the sitting-room door again, and

turned to Arnold—who had risen, in surprise, to his feet.

“Travelers!” she exclaimed. “At this time!”

“And in this weather!” added Arnold.

“*Can* it be Geoffrey?” she asked, going back to the old vain delusion that he might yet feel for her, and return.

Arnold shook his head. “Not Geoffrey. Whoever else it may be—not Geoffrey!”

Mrs. Inchbare suddenly entered the room, with her cap-ribbons flying, her eyes staring, and her bones looking harder than ever.

“Eh, mistress!” she said to Anne. “Wha do ye think has driven here to see ye, from Windygates Hoose, and been overtaken in the storm?”

Anne was speechless. Arnold put the question: “Who is it?”

“Wha is’t?” repeated Mrs. Inchbare. “It’s joost the bonny young leddy—Miss Blanche herself’.”

An irrepressible cry of horror burst from Anne. The landlady set it down to the lightning, which flashed into the room again at the same moment.

“Eh, mistress! ye’ll find Miss Blanche a bit baulder than to skirl at a flash o’ lightning, that gait! Here she is, the bonny birdie!” exclaimed Mrs. Inchbare, deferentially backing out into the passage again.

Blanche’s voice reached them, calling for Anne.

Anne caught Arnold by the hand and wrung

it hard. "Go!" she whispered. The next instant she was at the mantelpiece and had blown out both the candles.

Another flash of lightning came through the darkness, and showed Blanche's figure standing at the door.

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## CHAPTER THE THIRTEENTH.

### BLANCHE.

MRS. INCHBARE was the first person who acted in the emergency. She called for lights; and sternly rebuked the housemaid, who brought them, for not having closed the house door. "Ye feckless ne'er-do-weel!" cried the landlady; "the wind's blawn the candles oot."

The woman declared (with perfect truth) that the door had been closed. An awkward dispute might have ensued if Blanche had not diverted Mrs. Inchbare's attention to herself. The appearance of the lights disclosed her, wet through, with her arms round Anne's neck. Mrs. Inchbare digressed at once to the pressing question of changing the young lady's clothes, and gave Anne the opportunity of looking round her unobserved. Arnold had made his escape before the candles had been brought in.

In the meantime Blanche's attention was absorbed in her own dripping skirts.

"Good gracious! I'm absolutely distilling rain from every part of me. And I'm making

you, Anne, as wet as I am! Lend me some dry things. You can't? Mrs. Inchbare, what does your experience suggest? Which had I better do? Go to bed while my clothes are being dried? or borrow from your wardrobe—though you *are* a head and shoulders taller than I am?"

Mrs. Inchbare instantly bustled out to fetch the choicest garments that her wardrobe could produce. The moment the door had closed on her Blanche looked round the room in her turn. The rights of affection having been already asserted, the claims of curiosity naturally pressed for satisfaction next.

"Somebody passed me in the dark," she whispered. "Was it your husband? I'm dying to be introduced to him. And, oh, my dear! what *is* your married name?"

Anne answered, coldly, "Wait a little. I can't speak about it yet."

"Are you ill?" asked Blanche.

"I am a little nervous."

"Has anything unpleasant happened between you and my uncle? You have seen him, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Did he give you my message?"

"He gave me your message.—Blanche! you promised him to stay at Windygates. Why, in the name of Heaven, did you come here to-night?"

"If you were half as fond of me as I am of you," returned Blanche, "you wouldn't ask that. I tried hard to keep my promise, but I



couldn't do it. It was all very well, while my uncle was laying down the law—with Lady Lundie in a rage, and the dogs barking, and the doors banging, and all that. The excitement kept me up. But when my uncle had gone, and the dreadful gray, quiet, rainy evening came, and it had all calmed down again, there was no bearing it. The house—without you—was like a tomb. If I had had Arnold with me I might have done very well. But I was all by myself. Think of that! Not a soul to speak to! There wasn't a horrible thing that could possibly happen to you that I didn't fancy was going to happen. I went into your empty room and looked at your things. *That* settled it, my darling! I rushed down stairs—carried away, positively carried away, by an impulse beyond human resistance. How could I help it? I ask any reasonable person how could I help it? I ran to the stables and found Jacob. Impulse—all impulse, I said, 'Get the pony-chaise—I must have a drive; I don't care if it rains—you come with me.' All in a breath, and all impulse! Jacob behaved like an angel. He said, 'All right, miss' I am perfectly certain Jacob would die for me if I asked him. He is drinking hot grog at this moment, to prevent him from catching cold, by my express orders. He had the pony-chaise out in two minutes; and off we went. Lady Lundie, my dear, prostrate in her own room—too much *sal volatile*. I hate her. The rain got worse. I didn't mind it. Jacob didn't mind it. The pony didn't mind it. They had



THE PONY SHOOK HIS DARLING LITTLE HEAD, AND DASHED THROUGH IT.

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 215.



both caught my impulse—especially the pony. It didn't come on to thunder till some time afterward; and then we were nearer Craig Fernie than Windygates—to say nothing of your being at one place and not at the other. The lightning was quite awful on the moor. If I had had one of the horses, he would have been frightened. The pony shook his darling little head, and dashed through it. He is to have beer—a mash with beer in it—by my express orders. When he has done we'll borrow a lantern, and go into the stable and kiss him. In the meantime, my dear, here I am—wet through in a thunder-storm, which doesn't in the least matter—and determined to satisfy my own mind about you, which matters a great deal, and must and shall be done before I rest to-night!”

She turned Anne, by main force, as she spoke, toward the light of the candles.

Her tone changed the moment she looked at Anne's face.

“I knew it!” she said. “You would never have kept the most interesting event in your life a secret from *me*—you would never have written me such a cold formal letter as the letter you left in your room—if there had not been something wrong. I said so at the time. I know it now! Why has your husband forced you to leave Windygates at a moment's notice? Why does he slip out of the room in the dark, as if he was afraid of being seen? Anne! Anne! what has come to you? Why do you receive me in this way?”

At that critical moment Mrs. Inchbare reappeared, with the choicest selection of wearing apparel which her wardrobe could furnish. Anne hailed the welcome interruption. She took the candles, and led the way into the bedroom immediately.

"Change your wet clothes first," she said. "We can talk after that."

The bedroom door had hardly been closed a minute before there was a tap at it. Singing to Mrs. Inchbare not to interrupt the services she was rendering to Blanche, Anne passed quickly into the sitting-room and closed the door behind her. To her infinite relief, she only found herself face to face with the discreet Mr. Bishopriggs.

"What do you want?" she asked.

The eye of Mr. Bishopriggs announced, by a wink, that his mission was of a confidential nature. The hand of Mr. Bishopriggs wavered; the breath of Mr. Bishopriggs exhaled a spirituous fume. He slowly produced a slip of paper with some lines of writing on it.

"From ye ken who," he explained, jocosely. "A bit love-letter, I trow, from him that's dear to ye. Eh! he's an awfu' reprobate is him that's dear to ye. Miss, in the bed-chamber there, will nae doot be the one he's jilted for *you*? I see it all—ye can't blind Me—I ha' been a frail person my ain self in my time. Hech! he's safe and sound, is the reprobate. I ha' lookit after a' his little creature-comforts—I'm joost a fether to him, as well as a fether to you. Trust

Bishopriggs—when puir human nature wants a bit pat on the back, trust Bishopriggs.”

While the sage was speaking these comfortable words, Anne was reading the lines traced on the paper. They were signed by Arnold; and they ran thus:

“I am in the smoking-room of the inn. It rests with you to say whether I must stop there. I don’t believe Blanche would be jealous. If I knew how to explain my being at the inn without betraying the confidence which you and Geoffrey have placed in me, I wouldn’t be away from her another moment. It does grate on me so! At the same time, I don’t want to make your position harder than it is. Think of yourself first. I leave it in your hands. You have only to say, Wait, by the bearer—and I shall understand that I am to stay where I am till I hear from you again.”

Anne looked up from the message.

“Ask him to wait,” she said; “and I will send word to him again.”

“Wi’ mony loves and kisses,” suggested Mr. Bishopriggs, as a necessary supplement to the message. “Eh! it comes as easy as A B C to a man o’ my experience. Ye can ha’ nae’ better gae-between than yer puir servant to command, Sawmuel Bishopriggs. I understand ye baith pairfeckly.” He laid his forefinger along his flaming nose, and withdrew.

Without allowing herself to hesitate for an instant, Anne opened the bedroom door—with the resolution of relieving Arnold from the



new sacrifice imposed on him by owning the truth.

“Is that you?” asked Blanche.

At the sound of her voice, Anne started back guiltily. “I’ll be with you in a moment,” she answered, and closed the door again between them.

No! it was not to be done. Something in Blanche’s trivial question—or something, perhaps, in the sight of Blanche’s face—roused the warning instinct in Anne, which silenced her on the very brink of the disclosure. At the last moment, the iron chain of circumstances made itself felt, binding her without mercy to the hateful, the degrading deceit. Could she own the truth, about Geoffrey and herself, to Blanche? and, without owning it, could she explain and justify Arnold’s conduct in joining her privately at Craig Fernie? A shameful confession made to an innocent girl; a risk of fatally shaking Arnold’s place in Blanche’s estimation; a scandal at the inn, in the disgrace of which the others would be involved with herself—this was the price at which she must speak, if she followed her first impulse, and said, in so many words, “Arnold is here.”

It was not to be thought of. Cost what it might in present wretchedness—end how it might, if the deception was discovered in the future—Blanche must be kept in ignorance of the truth; Arnold must be kept in hiding until she had gone.

Anne opened the door for the second time, and went in.



The business of the toilet was standing still. Blanche was in confidential communication with Mrs. Inchbare. At the moment when Anne entered the room she was eagerly questioning the landlady about her friend's "invisible husband"—she was just saying, "Do tell me! what is he like?"

The capacity for accurate observation is a capacity so uncommon, and is so seldom associated, even where it does exist, with the equally rare gift of accurately describing the thing or the person observed, that Anne's dread of the consequences if Mrs. Inchbare was allowed time to comply with Blanche's request was, in all probability, a dread misplaced. Right or wrong, however, the alarm that she felt hurried her into taking measures for dismissing the landlady on the spot. "We mustn't keep you from your occupations any longer," she said to Mrs. Inchbare. "I will give Miss Lundie all the help she needs."

Barred from advancing in one direction, Blanche's curiosity turned back, and tried in another. She boldly addressed herself to Anne.

"I *must* know something about him," she said. "Is he shy before strangers? I heard you whispering with him on the other side of the door. Are you jealous, Anne? Are you afraid I shall fascinate him in this dress?"

Blanche, in Mrs. Inchbare's best gown—an ancient and high-waisted silk garment, of the hue called "bottle-green," pinned up in front, and trailing far behind her—with a short, or-

ange-colored shawl over her shoulders, and a towel tied turban-fashion round her head, to dry her wet hair, looked at once the strangest and the prettiest human anomaly that ever was seen. "For Heaven's sake," she said, gayly, "don't tell your husband I am in Mrs. Inchbare's clothes! I want to appear suddenly, without a word to warn him of what a figure I am! I should have nothing left to wish for in this world," she added, "if Arnold could only see me now!"

Looking in the glass, she noticed Anne's face reflected behind her, and started at the sight of it.

"What *is* the matter?" she asked. "Your face frightens me."

It was useless to prolong the pain of the inevitable misunderstanding between them. The one course to take was to silence all further inquiries then and there. Strongly as she felt this, Anne's inbred loyalty to Blanche still shrank from deceiving her to her face. "I might write it," she thought. "I can't say it, with Arnold Brinkworth in the same house with her!" Write it? As she reconsidered the word, a sudden idea struck her. She opened the bedroom door, and led the way back into the sitting-room.

"Gone again!" exclaimed Blanche, looking uneasily round the empty room. "Anne! there's something so strange in all this that I neither can, nor will, put up with your silence any longer. It's not just, it's not kind, to shut me

out of your confidence, after we have lived together like sisters all our lives!"

Anne sighed bitterly, and kissed her on the forehead. "You shall know all I *can* tell you—all I *dare* tell you," she said, gently. "Don't reproach me. It hurts me more than you think."

She turned away to the side-table and came back with a letter in her hand. "Read that," she said, and handed it to Blanche.

Blanche saw her own name on the address, in the handwriting of Anne.

"What does this mean?" she asked.

"I wrote to you, after Sir Patrick had left me," Anne replied. "I meant you to have received my letter to-morrow, in time to prevent any little imprudence into which your anxiety might hurry you. All that I *can* say to you is said there. Spare me the distress of speaking. Read it, Blanche."

Blanche still held the letter unopened.

"A letter from you to me! when we are both together, and both alone in the same room! It's worse than formal, Anne! It's as if there was a quarrel between us. Why should it distress you to speak to me?"

Anne's eyes dropped to the ground. She pointed to the letter for the second time.

Blanche broke the seal.

She passed rapidly over the opening sentences, and devoted all her attention to the second paragraph.

"And now, my love, you will expect me to atone for the surprise and distress that I have

caused you, by explaining what my situation really is, and by telling you all my plans for the future. Dearest Blanche! don't think me untrue to the affection we bear toward each other—don't think there is any change in my heart toward you—believe only that I am a very unhappy woman, and that I am in a position which forces me, against my own will, to be silent about myself. Silent even to you, the sister of my love—the one person in the world who is dearest to me! A time may come when I shall be able to open my heart to you. Oh, what good it will do me! what a relief it will be! For the present, I must be silent. For the present, we must be parted. God knows what it costs me to write this. I think of the dear old days that are gone; I remember how I promised your mother to be a sister to you, when her kind eyes looked at me for the last time—*your* mother, who was an angel from heaven to *mine*! All this comes back on me now, and breaks my heart. But it must be! my own Blanche, for the present, it must be! I will write often—I will think of you, my darling, night and day, till a happier future unites us again. God bless *you*, my dear one! And God help *me*!”

Blanche silently crossed the room to the sofa on which Anne was sitting, and stood there for a moment, looking at her. She sat down and laid her head on Anne's shoulder. Sorrowfully and quietly, she put the letter into her bosom—and took Anne's hand, and kissed it.

"All my questions are answered, dear. I will wait your time."

It was simply, sweetly, generously said.

Anne burst into tears.

\* \* \* \* \*

The rain still fell, but the storm was dying away.

Blanche left the sofa, and, going to the window, opened the shutters to look out at the night. She suddenly came back to Anne.

"I see lights," she said—"the lights of a carriage coming up out of the darkness of the moor. They are sending after me from Windygates. Go into the bedroom. It's just possible Lady Lundie may have come for me herself."

The ordinary relations of the two toward each other were completely reversed. Anne was like a child in Blanche's hands. She rose and withdrew.

Left alone, Blanche took the letter out of her bosom, and read it again, in the interval of waiting for the carriage.

The second reading confirmed her in a resolution which she had privately taken, while she had been sitting by Anne on the sofa—a resolution destined to lead to far more serious results in the future than any previsions of hers could anticipate. Sir Patrick was the one person she knew on whose discretion and experience she could implicitly rely. She determined, in Anne's own interests, to take her uncle into her confidence, and to tell him all that had happened at the inn. "I'll first make him forgive me,"

thought Blanche. "And then I'll see if he thinks as I do, when I tell him about Anne."

The carriage drew up at the door; and Mrs. Inchbare showed in—not Lady Lundie, but Lady Lundie's maid.

The woman's account of what had happened at Windygates was simple enough. Lady Lundie had, as a matter of course, placed the right interpretation on Blanche's abrupt departure in the pony-chaise, and had ordered the carriage with the firm determination of following her step-daughter herself. But the agitations and anxieties of the day had proved too much for her. She had been seized by one of the attacks of giddiness to which she was always subject after excessive mental irritation; and, eager as she was (on more accounts than one) to go to the inn herself, she had been compelled, in Sir Patrick's absence, to commit the pursuit of Blanche to her own maid, in whose age and good sense she could place every confidence. The woman—seeing the state of the weather—had thoughtfully brought a box with her containing a change of wearing apparel. In offering it to Blanche, she added, with all due respect, that she had full powers from her mistress to go on, if necessary, to the shooting-cottage, and to place the matter in Sir Patrick's hands. This said, she left it to her young lady to decide for herself whether she would return to Windygates, under present circumstances, or not.

Blanche took the box from the woman's hands

and joined Anne in the bedroom, to dress herself for the drive home.

"I am going back to a good scolding," she said. "But a scolding is no novelty in my experience of Lady Lundie. I'm not uneasy about that, Anne—I'm uneasy about you. Can I be sure of one thing—do you stay here for the present?"

The worst that could happen at the inn *had* happened. Nothing was to be gained now—and everything might be lost—by leaving the place at which Geoffrey had promised to write to her. Anne answered that she proposed remaining at the inn for the present.

"You promise to write to me?"

"Yes."

"If there is anything I can do for you—"

"There is nothing, my love."

"There may be. If you want to see me, we can meet at Windygates without being discovered. Come at luncheon-time—go round by the shrubbery—and step in at the library window. You know as well as I do there is nobody in the library at that hour. Don't say it's impossible—you don't know what may happen. I shall wait ten minutes every day on the chance of seeing you. That's settled—and it's settled that you write. Before I go, darling, is there anything else we can think of for the future?"

At those words Anne suddenly shook off the depression that weighed on her. She caught Blanche in her arms; she held Blanche to her bosom with a fierce energy. "Will you always



be to me, in the future, what you are now?" she asked, abruptly. "Or is the time coming when you will hate me?" She prevented any reply by a kiss—and pushed Blanche toward the door. "We have had a happy time together in the years that are gone," she said, with a farewell wave of her hand. "Thank God for that! And never mind the rest."

She threw open the bedroom door, and called to the maid, in the sitting-room: "Miss Lundie is waiting for you." Blanche pressed her hand, and left her.

Anne waited a while in the bedroom, listening to the sound made by the departure of the carriage from the inn door. Little by little, the tramp of the horses and the noise of the rolling wheels lessened and lessened. When the last faint sounds were lost in silence she stood for a moment thinking—then, rousing herself on a sudden, hurried into the sitting-room, and rang the bell.

"I shall go mad," she said to herself, "if I stay here alone."

Even Mr. Bishopriggs felt the necessity of being silent when he stood face to face with her on answering the bell.

"I want to speak to him. Send him here instantly."

Mr. Bishopriggs understood her, and withdrew.

Arnold came in.

"Has she gone?" were the first words he said.

"She has gone. She won't suspect you when you see her again. I have told her nothing. Don't ask me for my reasons!"

"I have no wish to ask you."

"Be angry with me if you like!"

"I have no wish to be angry with you."

He spoke and looked like an altered man. Quietly seating himself at the table, he rested his head on his hand—and so remained silent. Anne was taken completely by surprise. She drew near, and looked at him curiously. Let a woman's mood be what it may, it is certain to feel the influence of any change for which she is unprepared in the manner of a man—when that man interests her. The cause of this is not to be found in the variableness of her humor. It is far more probably to be traced to the noble abnegation of Self, which is one of the grandest—and to the credit of woman be it said—one of the commonest virtues of the sex. Little by little the sweet feminine charm of Anne's face came softly and sadly back. The inbred nobility of the woman's nature answered the call which the man had unconsciously made on it. She touched Arnold on the shoulder.

"This has been hard on *you*," she said. "And I am to blame for it. Try and forgive me, Mr. Brinkworth. I am sincerely sorry. I wish with all my heart I could comfort you!"

"Thank you, Miss Silvester. It was not a very pleasant feeling, to be hiding from Blanche as if I was afraid of her—and it's set me thinking, I suppose, for the first time in my life.

Never mind. It's all over now. Can I do anything for you?"

"What do you propose doing to-night?"

"What I have proposed doing all along—my duty by Geoffrey. I have promised him to see you through your difficulties here, and to provide for your safety till he comes back. I can only make sure of doing that by keeping up appearances, and staying in the sitting-room to-night. When we next meet it will be under pleasanter circumstances, I hope. I shall always be glad to think that I was of some service to you. In the meantime I shall be most likely away to-morrow morning before you are up."

Anne held out her hand to take leave. Nothing could undo what had been done. The time for warning and remonstrance had passed away.

"You have not befriended an ungrateful woman," she said. "The day may yet come, Mr. Brinkworth, when I shall prove it."

"I hope not, Miss Silvester. Good-by, and good luck!"

She withdrew into her own room. Arnold locked the sitting-room door, and stretched himself on the sofa for the night.

\* \* \* \* \*

The morning was bright, the air was delicious after the storm.

Arnold had gone, as he had promised, before Anne was out of her room. It was understood at the inn that important business had unexpectedly called him south. Mr. Bishopriggs had been presented with a handsome gratuity;

and Mrs. Inchbare had been informed that the rooms were taken for a week certain.

In every quarter but one the march of events had now, to all appearance, fallen back into a quiet course. Arnold was on his way to his estate; Blanche was safe at Windygates; Anne's residence at the inn was assured for a week to come. The one present doubt was the doubt which hung over Geoffrey's movements. The one event still involved in darkness turned on the question of life or death waiting for solution in London—otherwise, the question of Lord Holchester's health. Taken by itself, the alternative, either way, was plain enough. If my lord lived—Geoffrey would be free to come back, and marry her privately in Scotland. If my lord died—Geoffrey would be free to send for her, and marry her publicly in London. But could Geoffrey be relied on?

Anne went out on to the terrace-ground in front of the inn. The cool morning breeze blew steadily. Towering white clouds sailed in grand procession over the heavens, now obscuring, and now revealing the sun. Yellow light and purple shadow chased each other over the broad brown surface of the moor—even as hope and fear chased each other over Anne's mind, brooding on what might come to her with the coming time.

She turned away, weary of questioning the impenetrable future, and went back to the inn.

Crossing the hall, she looked at the clock. It was past the hour when the train from Pertshire

was due in London. Geoffrey and his brother were, at that moment, on their way to Lord Holchester's house.

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*THIRD SCENE.—LONDON.*

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CHAPTER THE FOURTEENTH.

GEOFFREY AS A LETTER-WRITER.

LORD HOLCHESTER'S servants—with the butler at their head—were on the look-out for Mr. Julius Delamayn's arrival from Scotland. The appearance of the two brothers together took the whole domestic establishment by surprise. All inquiries were addressed to the butler by Julius; Geoffrey standing by, and taking no other than a listener's part in the proceedings.

"Is my father alive?"

"His lordship, I am rejoiced to say, has astonished the doctors, sir. He rallied last night in the most wonderful way. If things go on for the next eight-and-forty hours as they are going now, my lord's recovery is considered certain."

"What was the illness?"

"A paralytic stroke, sir. When her ladyship telegraphed to you in Scotland the doctors had given his lordship up."

"Is my mother at home?"

"Her ladyship is at home to *you*, sir."

The butler laid a special emphasis on the personal pronoun. Julius turned to his brother. The change for the better in the state of Lord Holchester's health made Geoffrey's position, at that moment, an embarrassing one. He had been positively forbidden to enter the house. His one excuse for setting that prohibitory sentence at defiance rested on the assumption that his father was actually dying. As matters now stood, Lord Holchester's order remained in full force. The under-servants in the hall (charged to obey that order as they valued their places) looked from "Mr. Geoffrey" to the butler. The butler looked from "Mr. Geoffrey" to "Mr. Julius." Julius looked at his brother. There was an awkward pause. The position of the second son was the position of a wild beast in the house—a creature to be got rid of, without risk to yourself, if you only knew how.

Geoffrey spoke, and solved the problem.

"Open the door, one of you fellows," he said to the footmen. "I'm off."

"Wait a minute," interposed his brother. "It will be a sad disappointment to my mother to know that you have been here, and gone away again without seeing her. These are no ordinary circumstances, Geoffrey. Come upstairs with me—I'll take it on myself."

"I'm blessed if I take it on *myself*?" returned Geoffrey. "Open the door!"

"Wait here, at any rate," pleaded Julius, "till I can send you down a message."

"Send your message to Nagle's Hotel. I'm at home at Nagle's—I'm not at home here."

At that point the discussion was interrupted by the appearance of a little terrier in the hall. Seeing strangers, the dog began to bark. Perfect tranquillity in the house had been absolutely insisted on by the doctors; and the servants, all trying together to catch the animal and quiet him, simply aggravated the noise he was making. Geoffrey solved this problem also in his own decisive way. He swung round as the dog was passing him, and kicked it with his heavy boot. The little creature fell on the spot, whining piteously. "My lady's pet dog!" exclaimed the butler. "You've broken its ribs, sir." "I've broken it of barking, you mean," retorted Geoffrey. "Ribs be hanged!" He turned to his brother. "That settles it," he said, jocosely. "I'd better defer the pleasure of calling on dear mamma till the next opportunity. Ta-ta, Julius. You know where to find me. Come and dine. We'll give you a steak at Nagle's that will make a man of you."

He went out. The tall footman eyed his lordship's second son with unaffected respect. They had seen him, in public, at the annual festival of the Christian-Pugilistic-Association, with "the gloves" on. He could have beaten the biggest man in the hall within an inch of his life in three minutes. The porter bowed as he threw open the door. The whole interest and attention of the domestic establishment then present was concentrated on Geoffrey. Julius



went upstairs to his mother without attracting the slightest notice.

The month was August. The streets were empty. The vilest breeze that blows—a hot east wind in London—was the breeze abroad on that day. Even Geoffrey appeared to feel the influence of the weather as the cab carried him from his father's door to the hotel. He took off his hat, and unbuttoned his waistcoat, and lighted his everlasting pipe, and growled and grumbled between his teeth in the intervals of smoking. Was it only the hot wind that wrung from him these demonstrations of discomfort? Or was there some secret anxiety in his mind which assisted the depressing influences of the day? There was a secret anxiety in his mind. And the name of it was—Anne.

As things actually were at that moment, what course was he to take with the unhappy woman who was waiting to hear from him at the Scotch inn?

To write? or not to write? That was the question with Geoffrey.

The preliminary difficulty, relating to addressing a letter to Anne at the inn, had been already provided for. She had decided—if it proved necessary to give her name before Geoffrey joined her—to call herself Mrs., instead of Miss, Silvester. A letter addressed to “Mrs. Silvester” might be trusted to find its way to her, without causing any embarrassment. The doubt was not here. The doubt lay, as usual, between two alternatives. Which course would it be wisest

to take?—to inform Anne, by that day's post, that an interval of forty-eight hours must elapse before his father's recovery could be considered certain? Or to wait till the interval was over, and be guided by the result? Considering the alternatives in the cab, he decided that the wise course was to temporize with Anne, by reporting matters as they then stood.

Arrived at the hotel, he sat down to write the letter—doubted—and tore it up—doubted again—and began again—doubted once more—and tore up the second letter—rose to his feet—and owned to himself (in unprintable language) that he couldn't for the life of him decide which was safest—to write or to wait.

In this difficulty, his healthy physical instincts sent him to healthy physical remedies for relief. "My mind's in a muddle," said Geoffrey. "I'll try a bath."

It was an elaborate bath, proceeding through many rooms, and combining many postures and applications. He steamed. He plunged. He simmered. He stood under a pipe, and received a cataract of cold water on his head. He was laid on his back; he was laid on his stomach; he was respectfully pounded and kneaded, from head to foot, by the knuckles of accomplished practitioners. He came out of it all, sleek, clear, rosy, beautiful. He returned to the hotel, and took up the writing materials—and behold the intolerable indecision seized him again, declining to be washed out! This time he laid it all to Anne. "That infernal woman will be the

ruin of me," said Geoffrey, taking up his hat. "I must try the dumb-bells."

The pursuit of the new remedy for stimulating a sluggish brain took him to a public-house, kept by the professional pedestrian who had the honor of training him when he contended at Athletic Sports.

"A private room and the dumb-bells!" cried Geoffrey. "The heaviest you have got."

He stripped himself of his upper clothing, and set to work with the heavy weights in each hand, waving them up and down and backward and forward, in every attainable variety of movement, till his magnificent muscles seemed on the point of starting through his sleek skin. Little by little his animal spirits roused themselves. The strong exertion intoxicated the strong man. In sheer excitement he swore cheerfully—invoking thunder and lightning, explosion and blood, in return for the compliments profusely paid to him by the pedestrian and the pedestrian's son. "Pen, ink, and paper!" he roared, when he could use the dumb-bells no longer. "My mind's made up; I'll write, and have done with it!" He sat down to his writing on the spot; he actually finished the letter; another minute would have dispatched it to the post—and, in that minute, the maddening indecision took possession of him once more. He opened the letter again, read it over again, and tore it up again. "I'm out of my mind!" cried Geoffrey, fixing his big bewildered blue eyes fiercely on the professor who trained him.

“Thunder and lightning! Explosion and blood! Send for Crouch.”

Crouch (known and respected wherever English manhood is known and respected) was a retired prize-fighter. He appeared with the third and last remedy for clearing the mind known to the Honorable Geoffrey Delamayn—namely, two pair of boxing-gloves in a carpet-bag.

The gentleman and the prize-fighter put on the gloves, and faced each other in the classically-correct posture of pugilistic defense. “None of your play, mind!” growled Geoffrey. “Fight, you beggar, as if you were in the Ring again, with orders to win.” No man knew better than the great and terrible Crouch what real fighting meant, and what heavy blows might be given even with such apparently harmless weapons as stuffed and padded gloves. He pretended, and only pretended, to comply with his patron’s request. Geoffrey rewarded him for his polite forbearance by knocking him down. The great and terrible rose with unruffled composure. “Well hit, sir!” he said. “Try it with the other hand, now.” Geoffrey’s temper was not under similar control. Invoking everlasting destruction on the frequently-blackened eyes of Crouch, he threatened instant withdrawal of his patronage and support unless the polite pugilist hit, then and there, as hard as he could. The hero of a hundred fights quailed at the dreadful prospect. “I’ve got a family to support,” remarked Crouch. “If you *will* have it, sir—there it is!” The fall of Geoffrey followed, and

shook the house. He was on his legs again in an instant—not satisfied even yet. “None of your body-hitting!” he roared. “Stick to my head. Thunder and lightning! explosion and blood! Knock it out of me! Stick to the head!” Obedient Crouch stuck to the head. The two gave and took blows which would have stunned—possibly have killed—any civilized member of the community. Now on one side of his patron’s iron skull, and now on the other, the hammering of the prize-fighter’s gloves fell, thump upon thump, horrible to hear—until even Geoffrey himself had had enough of it. “Thank you, Crouch,” he said, speaking civilly to the man for the first time. “That will do. I feel nice and clear again.” He shook his head two or three times; he was rubbed down like a horse by the professional runner; he drank a mighty draught of malt liquor; he recovered his good-humor as if by magic. “Want a pen and ink, sir?” inquired his pedestrian host. “Not I!” answered Geoffrey. “The muddle’s out of me now. Pen and ink be hanged! I shall look up some of our fellows, and go to the play.” He left the public-house in the happiest condition of mental calm. Inspired by the stimulant application of Crouch’s gloves, his torpid cunning had been shaken up into excellent working order at last. Write to Anne? Who but a fool would write to such a woman as that until he was forced to it? Wait and see what the chances of the next eight-and-forty hours might bring forth, and then write to her, or desert her, as the event

might decide. It lay in a nutshell, if you could only see it. Thanks to Crouch, he did see it—and so away, in a pleasant temper for a dinner with “our fellows” and an evening at the play!

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## CHAPTER THE FIFTEENTH.

### GEOFFREY IN THE MARRIAGE MARKET.

THE interval of eight-and-forty hours passed—without the occurrence of any personal communication between the two brothers in that time.

Julius, remaining at his father's house, sent brief written bulletins of Lord Holchester's health to his brother at the hotel. The first bulletin said, “Going on well. Doctors satisfied.” The second was firmer in tone. “Going on excellently. Doctors very sanguine.” The third was the most explicit of all. “I am to see my father in an hour from this. The doctors answer for his recovery. Depend on my putting in a good word for you, if I can; and wait to hear from me further at the hotel.”

Geoffrey's face darkened as he read the third bulletin. He called once more for the hated writing materials. There could be no doubt now as to the necessity of communicating with Anne. Lord Holchester's recovery had put him back again in the same critical position which he had occupied at Windygates. To keep Anne from committing some final act of despair, which

would connect him with a public scandal, and ruin him so far as his expectations from his father were concerned, was, once more, the only safe policy that Geoffrey could pursue. His letter began and ended in twenty words:

“DEAR ANNE—Have only just heard that my father is turning the corner. Stay where you are. Will write again.”

Having dispatched this Spartan composition by the post, Geoffrey lighted his pipe, and waited the event of the interview between Lord Holchester and his eldest son.

Julius found his father alarmingly altered in personal appearance, but in full possession of his faculties nevertheless. Unable to return the pressure of his son's hand—unable even to turn in the bed without help—the hard eye of the old lawyer was as keen, the hard mind of the old lawyer was as clear, as ever. His grand ambition was to see Julius in Parliament. Julius was offering himself for election in Perthshire, by his father's express desire, at that moment. Lord Holchester entered eagerly into politics before his eldest son had been two minutes by his bedside.

“Much obliged, Julius, for your congratulations. Men of my sort are not easily killed. (Look at Brougham and Lyndhurst!) You won't be called to the Upper House yet. You will begin in the House of Commons—precisely as I wished. What are your prospects with the



constituency? Tell me exactly how you stand, and where I can be of use to you."

"Surely, sir, you are hardly recovered enough to enter on matters of business yet?"

"I am quite recovered enough. I want some present interest to occupy me. My thoughts are beginning to drift back to past times, and to things which are better forgotten." A sudden contraction crossed his livid face. He looked hard at his son, and entered abruptly on a new question. "Julius!" he resumed, "have you ever heard of a young woman named Anne Silvester?"

Julius answered in the negative. He and his wife had exchanged cards with Lady Lundie, and had excused themselves from accepting her invitation to the lawn-party. With the exception of Blanche, they were both quite ignorant of the persons who composed the family circle at Windygates.

"Make a memorandum of the name," Lord Holchester went on. "Anne Silvester. Her father and mother are dead. I knew her father in former times. Her mother was ill-used. It was a bad business. I have been thinking of it again, for the first time for many years. If the girl is alive and about the world, she may remember our family name. Help her, Julius, if she ever wants help, and applies to you." The painful contraction passed across his face once more. Were his thoughts taking him back to the memorable summer evening at the Hampstead villa? Did he see the deserted woman

swooning at his feet again? "About your election?" he asked, impatiently. "My mind is not used to be idle. Give it something to do."

Julius stated his position as plainly and as briefly as he could. The father found nothing to object to in the report—except the son's absence from the field of action. He blamed Lady Holchester for summoning Julius to London. He was annoyed at his son's being there, at the bedside, when he ought to have been addressing the electors. "It's inconvenient, Julius," he said, petulantly. "Don't you see it yourself?"

Having previously arranged with his mother to take the first opportunity that offered of risking a reference to Geoffrey, Julius decided to "see it" in a light for which his father was not prepared. The opportunity was before him. He took it on the spot.

"It is no inconvenience to me, sir," he replied, "and it is no inconvenience to my brother either. Geoffrey was anxious about you too. Geoffrey has come to London with me."

Lord Holchester looked at his eldest son with a grimly-satirical expression of surprise.

"Have I not already told you," he rejoined, "that my mind is not affected by my illness? Geoffrey anxious about me! Anxiety is one of the civilized emotions. Man in his savage state is incapable of feeling it."

"My brother is not a savage, sir."

"His stomach is generally full, and his skin is covered with linen and cloth, instead of red

ochre and oil. So far, certainly, your brother is civilized. In all other respects your brother is a savage."

"I know what you mean, sir. But there is something to be said for Geoffrey's way of life. He cultivates his courage and his strength. Courage and strength are fine qualities, surely, in their way?"

"Excellent qualities, as far as they go. If you want to know how far that is, challenge Geoffrey to write a sentence of decent English, and see if his courage doesn't fail him there. Give him his books to read for his degree, and, strong as he is, he will be taken ill at the sight of them. You wish me to see your brother. Nothing will induce me to see him until his way of life (as you call it) is altered altogether. I have but one hope of its ever being altered now. It is barely possible that the influence of a sensible woman—possessed of such advantages of birth and fortune as may compel respect, even from a savage—might produce its effect on Geoffrey. If he wishes to find his way back into this house, let him find his way back into good society first, and bring me a daughter-in-law to plead his cause for him—whom his mother and I can respect and receive. When that happens, I shall begin to have some belief in Geoffrey. Until it does happen, don't introduce your brother into any future conversations which you may have with me. To return to your election. I have some advice to give you before you go back. You will do well to go back to-night. Lift me

up on the pillow. I shall speak more easily with my head high."

His son lifted him on the pillows, and once more entreated him to spare himself.

It was useless. No remonstrances shook the iron resolution of the man who had hewed his way through the rank and file of political humanity to his own high place apart from the rest. Helpless, ghastly, snatched out of the very jaws of Death, there he lay, steadily distilling the clear common sense which had won him all his worldly rewards into the mind of his son. Not a hint was missed, not a caution was forgotten, that could guide Julius safely through the miry political ways which he had trodden so safely and so dexterously himself. An hour more had passed before the impenetrable old man closed his weary eyes, and consented to take his nourishment and compose himself to rest. His last words, rendered barely articulate by exhaustion, still sang the praises of party maneuvers and political strife. "It's a grand career! I miss the House of Commons, Julius, as I miss nothing else!"

Left free to pursue his own thoughts and to guide his own movements, Julius went straight from Lord Holchester's bedside to Lady Holchester's boudoir.

"Has your father said anything about Geoffrey?" was his mother's first question as soon as he entered the room.

"My father gives Geoffrey a last chance, if Geoffrey will only take it."

Lady Holchester's face clouded. "I know," she said, with a look of disappointment. "His last chance is to read for his degree. Hopeless, my dear. Quite hopeless! If it had only been something easier than that; something that rested with me—"

"It does rest with you," interposed Julius. "My dear mother!—can you believe it?—Geoffrey's last chance is (in one word) Marriage!"

"Oh, Julius! it's too good to be true!"

Julius repeated his father's own words. Lady Holchester looked twenty years younger as she listened. When he had done she rang the bell.

"No matter who calls," she said to the servant, "I am not at home." She turned to Julius, kissed him, and made a place for him on the sofa by her side. "Geoffrey shall take *that* chance," she said, gayly—"I will answer for it! I have three women in my mind, any one of whom would suit him. Sit down, my dear, and let us consider carefully which of the three will be most likely to attract Geoffrey, and to come up to your father's standard of what his daughter-in-law ought to be. When we have decided, don't trust to writing. Go yourself and see Geoffrey at his hotel."

Mother and son entered on their consultation—and innocently sowed the seeds of a terrible harvest to come.

## CHAPTER THE SIXTEENTH.

## GEOFFREY AS A PUBLIC CHARACTER.

TIME had advanced to afternoon before the selection of Geoffrey's future wife was accomplished, and before the instructions of Geoffrey's brother were complete enough to justify the opening of the matrimonial negotiation at Nagle's Hotel.

"Don't leave him till you have got his promise," were Lady Holchester's last words when her son started on his mission.

“If Geoffrey doesn’t jump at what I am going to offer him,” was the son’s reply, “I shall agree with my father that the case is hopeless; and I shall end, like my father, in giving Geoffrey up.”

This was strong language for Julius to use. It was not easy to rouse the disciplined and equable temperament of Lord Holchester's eldest son. No two men were ever more thoroughly unlike each other than these two brothers. It is melancholy to acknowledge it of the blood-relation of a "stroke oar," but it must be owned, in the interests of truth, that Julius cultivated his intelligence. This degenerate Briton could

digest books—and couldn't digest beer. Could learn languages—and couldn't learn to row. Practiced the foreign vice of perfecting himself in the art of playing on a musical instrument—and couldn't learn the English virtue of knowing a good horse when he saw him. Got through life (Heaven only knows how!) without either a biceps or a betting-book. Had openly acknowledged, in English society, that he didn't think the barking of a pack of hounds the finest music in the world. Could go to foreign parts, and see a mountain which nobody had ever got to the top of yet—and didn't instantly feel his honor as an Englishman involved in getting to the top of it himself. Such people may, and do, exist among the inferior races of the Continent. Let us thank Heaven, sir, that England never has been, and never will be, the right place for them!

Arrived at Nagle's Hotel, and finding nobody to inquire of in the hall, Julius applied to the young lady who sat behind the window of "the bar." The young lady was reading something so deeply interesting in the evening newspaper that she never even heard him. Julius went into the coffee-room.

The waiter, in his corner, was absorbed over a second newspaper. Three gentlemen, at three different tables, were absorbed in a third, fourth and fifth newspaper. They all alike went on with their reading without noticing the entrance of the stranger. Julius ventured on disturbing the waiter by asking for Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn.



At the sound of that illustrious name the waiter looked up with a start.

"Are you Mr. Delamayn's brother, sir?"

"Yes."

The three gentlemen at the tables looked up with a start. The light of Geoffrey's celebrity fell, reflected, on Geoffrey's brother, and made a public character of him.

"You'll find Mr. Geoffrey, sir," said the waiter, in a flurried, excited manner, "at the Cock and Bottle, Putney."

"I expected to find him here. I had an appointment with him at this hotel."

The waiter opened his eyes on Julius with an expression of blank astonishment. "Haven't you heard the news, sir?"

"No."

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the waiter—and offered the newspaper.

"God bless my soul!" exclaimed the three gentlemen—and offered the three newspapers.

"What is it?" asked Julius.

"What is it?" repeated the waiter, in a hollow voice. "The most dreadful thing that's happened in my time. It's all up, sir, with the Great Foot-race at Fulham. Tinkler has gone stale."

The three gentlemen dropped solemnly back into their three chairs, and repeated the dreadful intelligence, in chorus—"Tinkler has gone stale."

A man who stands face to face with a great national disaster, and who doesn't understand

it, is a man who will do wisely to hold his tongue, and enlighten his mind without asking other people to help him. Julius accepted the waiter's newspaper, and sat down to make (if possible) two discoveries: First, as to whether "Tinkler" did, or did not, mean a man. Second, as to what particular form of human affliction you implied when you described that man as "gone stale."

There was no difficulty in finding the news. It was printed in the largest type, and was followed by a personal statement of the facts, taken one way—which was followed, in its turn, by another personal statement of the facts, taken in another way. More particulars, and further personal statements were promised in later editions. The royal salute of British journalism thundered the announcement of Tinkler's staleness before a people prostrate on the national betting-book.

Divested of exaggeration, the facts were few enough and simple enough. A famous Athletic Association of the North had challenged a famous Athletic Association of the South. The usual "Sports" were to take place—such as running, jumping, "putting" the hammer, throwing cricket-balls, and the like—and the whole was to wind up with a Foot-Race of unexampled length and difficulty in the annals of human achievement between the two best men on either side. "Tinkler" was the best man on the side of the South. "Tinkler" was backed in innumerable betting-books to win. And Tinkler's

lungs had suddenly given way under stress of training! A prospect of witnessing a prodigious achievement in foot-racing, and (more important still) a prospect of winning and losing large sums of money, was suddenly withdrawn from the eyes of the British people. The "South" could produce no second opponent worthy of the North out of its own associated resources. Surveying the athletic world in general, but one man existed who might possibly replace "Tinkler"—and it was doubtful, in the last degree, whether he would consent to come forward under the circumstances. The name of that man—Julius read it with horror—was Geoffrey Delamayn.

Profound silence reigned in the coffee-room. Julius laid down the newspaper and looked about him. The waiter was busy, in his corner, with a pencil and a betting-book. The three gentlemen were busy, at the three tables, with pencils and betting-books.

"Try and persuade him!" said the waiter, piteously, as Delamayn's brother rose to leave the room.

"Try and persuade him!" echoed the three gentlemen, as Delamayn's brother opened the door and went out.

Julius called a cab, and told the driver (busy with a pencil and a betting-book) to go to the Cock and Bottle, Putney. The man brightened into a new being at the prospect. No need to hurry him; he drove, unasked, at the top of his horse's speed.

As the cab drew near to its destination the signs of a great national excitement appeared, and multiplied. The lips of a people pronounced, with a grand unanimity, the name of "Tinkler." The heart of a people hung suspended (mostly in the public-houses) on the chances for and against the possibility of replacing "Tinkler" by another man. The scene in front of the inn was impressive in the highest degree. Even the London blackguard stood awed and quiet in the presence of the national calamity. Even the irrepressible man with the apron, who always turns up to sell nuts and sweetmeats in a crowd, plied his trade in silence, and found few indeed (to the credit of the nation be it spoken) who had the heart to crack a nut at such a time as this. The police were on the spot, in large numbers, and in mute sympathy with the people, touching to see. Julius, on being stopped at the door, mentioned his name—and received an ovation. His brother! oh, heavens, his brother! The people closed round him, the people shook hands with him, the people invoked blessings on his head. Julius was half suffocated, when the police rescued him, and landed him safe in the privileged haven on the inner side of the public-house door. A deafening tumult broke out, as he entered, from the regions above stairs. A distant voice screamed, "Mind yourselves!" A hatless shouting man tore down through the people congregated on the stairs. "Hooray! Hooray! He's promised to do it! He's entered for the race!" Hundreds

on hundreds of voices took up the cry. A roar of cheering burst from the people outside. Reporters for the newspapers raced, in frantic procession, out of the inn, and rushed into cabs to put the news in print. The hand of the landlord, leading Julius carefully upstairs by the arm, trembled with excitement. "His brother, gentlemen! his brother!" At those magic words a lane was made through the throng. At those magic words the closed door of the council-chamber flew open; and Julius found himself among the Athletes of his native country, in full parliament assembled. Is any description of them needed? The description of Geoffrey applies to them all. The manhood and muscle of England resemble the wool and mutton of England, in this respect, that there is about as much variety in a flock of athletes as in a flock of sheep. Julius looked about him, and saw the same man in the same dress, with the same health, strength, tone, tastes, habits, conversation, and pursuits, repeated infinitely in every part of the room. The din was deafening; the enthusiasm (to an uninitiated stranger) something at once hideous and terrifying to behold. Geoffrey had been lifted bodily on to the table, in his chair, so as to be visible to the whole room. They sang round him, they danced round him, they cheered round him, they swore round him. He was hailed, in maudlin terms of endearment, by grateful giants with tears in their eyes. "Dear old man!" "Glorious, noble, splendid, beautiful fellow!" They hugged him.

They patted him on the back. They wrung his hands. They prodded and punched his muscles. They embraced the noble legs that were going to run the unexampled race. At the opposite end of the room, where it was physically impossible to get near the hero, the enthusiasm vented itself in feats of strength and acts of destruction. Hercules I. cleared a space with his elbows, and laid down—and Hercules II. took him up in his teeth. Hercules III. seized the poker from the fire-place, and broke it on his arm. Hercules IV. followed with the tongs, and shattered them on his neck. The smashing of the furniture and the pulling down of the house seemed likely to succeed—when Geoffrey's eye lighted by accident on Julius, and Geoffrey's voice, calling fiercely for his brother, hushed the wild assembly into sudden attention, and turned the fiery enthusiasm into a new course. Hooray for his brother! One, two, three—and up with his brother on our shoulders! Four, five, six—and on with his brother, over our heads, to the other end of the room! See, boys—see! the hero has got him by the collar! the hero has lifted him on the table! The hero, heated red-hot with his own triumph, welcomes the poor little snob cheerfully, with a volley of oaths. "Thunder and lightning! Explosion and blood! What's up now, Julius? What's up now?"

Julius recovered his breath, and arranged his coat. The quiet little man, who had just muscle enough to lift a Dictionary from the shelf, and just training enough to play the fiddle, so far



from being daunted by the rough reception accorded to him, appeared to feel no other sentiment in relation to it than a sentiment of unmitigated contempt.

"You're not frightened, are you?" said Geoffrey. "Our fellows are a roughish lot, but they mean well."

"I am not frightened," answered Julius. "I am only wondering—when the Schools and Universities of England turn out such a set of ruffians as these—how long the Schools and Universities of England will last."

"Mind what you are about, Julius! They'll cart you out of window if they hear you."

"They will only confirm my opinion of them, Geoffrey, if they do."

Here the assembly, seeing but not hearing the colloquy between the two brothers, became uneasy on the subject of the coming race. A roar of voices summoned Geoffrey to announce it, if there was anything wrong. Having pacified the meeting, Geoffrey turned again to his brother, and asked him, in no amiable mood, what the devil he wanted there?

"I want to tell you something before I go back to Scotland," answered Julius. "My father is willing to give you a last chance. If you don't take it, *my* doors are closed against you as well as *his*."

Nothing is more remarkable, in its way, than the sound common sense and admirable self-restraint exhibited by the youth of the present time, when confronted by an emergency in which



their own interests are concerned. Instead of resenting the tone which his brother had taken with him, Geoffrey instantly descended from the pedestal of glory on which he stood, and placed himself without a struggle in the hands which vicariously held his destiny—otherwise, the hands which vicariously held the purse. In five minutes more the meeting had been dismissed, with all needful assurances relating to Geoffrey's share in the coming Sports—and the two brothers were closeted together in one of the private rooms of the inn.

“Out with it!” said Geoffrey. “And don't be long about it.”

“I won't be five minutes,” replied Julius. “I go back to-night by the mail train; and I have a great deal to do in the meantime. Here it is, in plain words: My father consents to see you again, if you choose to settle in life—with his approval. And my mother has discovered where you may find a wife. Birth, beauty and money are all offered to you. Take them—and you recover your position as Lord Holchester's son. Refuse them—and you go to ruin your own way.”

Geoffrey's reception of the news from home was not of the most re-assuring kind. Instead of answering, he struck his fist furiously on the table, and cursed with all his heart some absent woman unnamed.

“I have nothing to do with any degrading connection which you may have formed,” Julius went on. “I have only to put the matter before

you exactly as it stands and to leave you to decide for yourself. The lady in question was formerly Miss Newenden—a descendant of one of the oldest families in England. She is now Mrs. Glenarm—the young widow (and the childless widow) of the great iron-master of that name. Birth and fortune—she unites both. Her income is a clear ten thousand a year. My father can, and will, make it fifteen thousand, if you are lucky enough to persuade her to marry you. My mother answers for her personal qualities. And my wife has met her at our house in London. She is now, as I hear, staying with some friends in Scotland; and when I get back I will take care that an invitation is sent to her to pay her next visit at my house. It remains, of course, to be seen whether you are fortunate enough to produce a favorable impression on her. In the meantime you will be doing everything that my father can ask of you, if you make the attempt.”

Geoffrey impatiently dismissed that part of the question from all consideration.

“If she don’t cotton to a man who’s going to run in the Great Race at Fulham,” he said, “there are plenty as good as she is who will! That’s not the difficulty. Bother *that*!”

“I tell you again, I have nothing to do with your difficulties,” Julius resumed. “Take the rest of the day to consider what I have said to you. If you decide to accept the proposal, I shall expect you to prove you are in earnest by meeting me at the station to-night. We will travel back to Scotland together. You will

complete your interrupted visit at Lady Lundie's (it is important, in my interests, that you should treat a person of her position in the county with all due respect); and my wife will make the necessary arrangements with Mrs. Glenarm, in anticipation of your return to our house. There is nothing more to be said, and no further necessity of my staying here. If you join me at the station to-night, your sister-in-law and I will do all we can to help you. If I travel back to Scotland alone, don't trouble yourself to follow—I have done with you." He shook hands with his brother, and went out.

Left alone, Geoffrey lighted his pipe and sent for the landlord.

"Get me a boat. I shall scull myself up the river for an hour or two. And put in some towels. I may take a swim."

The landlord received the order—with a caution addressed to his illustrious guest.

"Don't show yourself in front of the house, sir! If you let the people see you, they're in such a state of excitement the police won't answer for keeping them in order."

"All right. I'll go out by the back way."

He took a turn up and down the room. What were the difficulties to be overcome before he could profit by the golden prospect which his brother had offered to him? The Sports? No! The committee had promised to defer the day, if he wished it—and a month's training, in his physical condition, would be amply enough for him. Had he any personal objection to trying

his luck with Mrs. Glenarm? Not he! Any woman would do—provided his father was satisfied, and the money was all right. The obstacle which was really in his way was the obstacle of the woman whom he had ruined. Anne! The one insuperable difficulty was the difficulty of dealing with Anne.

“We’ll see how it looks,” he said to himself, “after a pull up the river!”

The landlord and the police inspector smuggled him out by the back way unknown to the expectant populace in front. The two men stood on the river-bank admiring him, as he pulled away from them, with his long, powerful, easy, beautiful stroke.

“That’s what I call the pride and flower of England!” said the inspector. “Has the betting on him begun?”

“Six to four,” said the landlord, “and no takers.”

Julius went early to the station that night. His mother was very anxious. “Don’t let Geoffrey find an excuse in your example,” she said, “if he is late.”

The first person whom Julius saw on getting out of the carriage was Geoffrey—with his ticket taken, and his portmanteau in charge of the guard.

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*FOURTH SCENE.—WINDYGATES.*

## CHAPTER THE SEVENTEENTH.

## NEAR IT.

THE library at Windygates was the largest and the handsomest room in the house. The two grand divisions under which Literature is usually arranged in these days occupied the customary places in it. On the shelves which ran round the walls were the books which humanity in general respects—and does not read. On the tables distributed over the floor were the books which humanity in general reads—and does not respect. In the first class, the works of the wise ancients; and the Histories, Biographies, and Essays of writers of more modern times—otherwise the Solid Literature, which is universally respected, and occasionally read. In the second class, the Novels of our own day—otherwise the Light Literature, which is universally read, and occasionally respected. At Windygates, as elsewhere, we believed History to be high literature, because it assumed to be true to Authorities (of which we knew little)—and Fiction to be low literature, because it attempted to be true to Nature (of which we knew less). At Windygates, as elsewhere, we were always more or less satisfied with ourselves, if we were publicly

discovered consulting our History—and more or less ashamed of ourselves, if we were publicly discovered devouring our Fiction. An architectural peculiarity in the original arrangement of the library favored the development of this common and curious form of human stupidity. While a row of luxurious arm-chairs, in the main thoroughfare of the room, invited the reader of solid literature to reveal himself in the act of cultivating a virtue, a row of snug little curtained recesses, opening at intervals out of one of the walls, enabled the reader of light literature to conceal himself in the act of indulging a vice. For the rest, all the minor accessories of this spacious and tranquil place were as plentiful and as well chosen as the heart could desire. And solid literature and light literature, and great writers and small, were all bounteously illuminated alike by a fine broad flow of the light of heaven, pouring into the room through windows that opened to the floor.

It was the fourth day from the day of Lady Lundie's garden-party, and it wanted an hour or more of the time at which the luncheon-bell usually rang.

The guests at Windygates were most of them in the garden, enjoying the morning sunshine, after a prevalent mist and rain for some days past. Two gentlemen (exceptions to the general rule) were alone in the library. They were the last two gentlemen in the world who could possibly be supposed to have any legitimate mo-

tive for meeting each other in a place of literary seclusion. One was Arnold Brinkworth, and the other was Geoffrey Delamayn.

They had arrived together at Windygates that morning. Geoffrey had traveled from London with his brother by the train of the previous night. Arnold, delayed in getting away at his own time, from his own property, by ceremonies incidental to his position which were not to be abridged without giving offense to many worthy people—had caught the passing train early that morning at the station nearest to him, and had returned to Lady Lundie's, as he had left Lady Lundie's, in company with his friend.

After a short preliminary interview with Blanche, Arnold had rejoined Geoffrey in the safe retirement of the library, to say what was still left to be said between them on the subject of Anne. Having completed his report of events at Craig Fernie, he was now naturally waiting to hear what Geoffrey had to say on his side. To Arnold's astonishment, Geoffrey coolly turned away to leave the library without uttering a word. Arnold stopped him without ceremony.

"Not quite so fast, Geoffrey," he said. "I have an interest in Miss Silvester's welfare as well as in yours. Now you are back again in Scotland, what are you going to do?"

If Geoffrey had told the truth, he must have stated his position much as follows:

He had necessarily decided on deserting Anne when he had decided on joining his brother on the journey back. But he had advanced no fur-



ther than this. How he was to abandon the woman who had trusted him, without seeing his own dastardly conduct dragged into the light of day, was more than he yet knew. A vague idea of at once pacifying and deluding Anne, by a marriage which should be no marriage at all, had crossed his mind on the journey. He had asked himself whether a trap of that sort might not be easily set in a country notorious for the looseness of its marriage laws—if a man only knew how? And he had thought it likely that his well-informed brother, who lived in Scotland, might be tricked into innocently telling him what he wanted to know. He had turned the conversation to the subject of Scotch marriages in general by way of trying the experiment. Julius had not studied the question; Julius knew nothing about it; and there the experiment had come to an end. As the necessary result of the check thus encountered, he was now in Scotland with absolutely nothing to trust to as a means of effecting his release but the chapter of accidents, aided by his own resolution to marry Mrs. Glenarm. Such was his position, and such should have been the substance of his reply, when he was confronted by Arnold's question, and plainly asked what he meant to do.

"The right thing," he answered, unblushingly. "And no mistake about it."

"I'm glad to hear you see your way so plainly," returned Arnold. "In your place, I should have been all abroad. I was wondering, only

the other day, whether you would end, as I should have ended, in consulting Sir Patrick."

Geoffrey eyed him sharply.

"Consult Sir Patrick?" he repeated. "Why would you have done that?"

"I shouldn't have known how to set about marrying her," replied Arnold. "And—being in Scotland—I should have applied to Sir Patrick (without mentioning names, of course), because he would be sure to know all about it."

"Suppose I don't see my way quite so plainly as you think," said Geoffrey. "Would you advise me—"

"To consult Sir Patrick? Certainly! He has passed his life in the practice of the Scotch law. Didn't you know that?"

"No."

"Then take my advice—and consult him. You needn't mention names. You can say it's the case of a friend."

The idea was a new and a good one. Geoffrey looked longingly toward the door. Eager to make Sir Patrick his innocent accomplice on the spot, he made a second attempt to leave the library; and made it for the second time in vain. Arnold had more unwelcome inquiries to make, and more advice to give unasked.

"How have you arranged about meeting Miss Silvester?" he went on. "You can't go to the hotel in the character of her husband. I have prevented that. Where else are you to meet her? She is all alone; she must be weary of waiting,

poor thing. Can you manage matters so as to see her to-day?"

After staring hard at Arnold while he was speaking, Geoffrey burst out laughing when he had done. A disinterested anxiety for the welfare of another person was one of those refinements of feeling which a muscular education had not fitted him to understand.

"I say, old boy," he burst out, "you seem to take an extraordinary interest in Miss Silvester! You haven't fallen in love with her yourself—have you?"

"Come! come!" said Arnold, seriously. "Neither she nor I deserve to be sneered at in that way. I have made a sacrifice to your interests, Geoffrey—and so has she."

Geoffrey's face became serious again. His secret was in Arnold's hands; and his estimate of Arnold's character was founded, unconsciously, on his experience of himself. "All right," he said, by way of timely apology and concession. "I was only joking."

"As much joking as you please, when you have married her," replied Arnold. "It seems serious enough, to my mind, till then." He stopped—considered—and laid his hand very earnestly on Geoffrey's arm. "Mind!" he resumed. "You are not to breathe a word to any living soul of my having been near the inn!"

"I've promised to hold my tongue, once already. What do you want more?"

"I am anxious, Geoffrey. I was at Craig Fernie, remember, when Blanche came there!

She has been telling me all that happened, poor darling, in the firm persuasion that I was miles off at the time. I swear I couldn't look her in the face! What would she think of me if she knew the truth? Pray be careful! pray be careful!"

Geoffrey's patience began to fail him.

"We had all this out," he said, "on the way here from the station. What's the good of going over the ground again?"

"You're quite right," said Arnold, good-humoredly. "The fact is—I'm out of sorts this morning. My mind misgives me—I don't know why."

"Mind?" repeated Geoffrey, in high contempt. "It's flesh—that's what's the matter with *you*. You're nigh on a stone over your right weight. Mind be hanged! A man in healthy training don't know that he has got a mind. Take a turn with the dumb-bells, and run up hill with a great-coat on. Sweat it off, Arnold! Sweat it off!"

With that excellent advice, he turned to leave the room for the third time. Fate appeared to have determined to keep him imprisoned in the library that morning. On this occasion, it was a servant who got in the way—a servant, with a letter and a message. "The man waits for an answer."

Geoffrey looked at the letter. It was in his brother's handwriting. He had left Julius at the junction about three hours since. What could Julius possibly have to say to him now?

He opened the letter. Julius had to announce that Fortune was favoring them already. He had heard news of Mrs. Glenarm, as soon as he reached home. She had called on his wife, during his absence in London—she had been invited to the house—and she had promised to accept the invitation early in the week. “Early in the week,” Julius wrote, “may mean to-morrow. Make your apologies to Lady Lundie; and take care not to offend her. Say that family reasons, which you hope soon to have the pleasure of confiding to her, oblige you to appeal once more to her indulgence—and come to-morrow, and help us to receive Mrs. Glenarm.”

Even Geoffrey was startled, when he found himself met by a sudden necessity for acting on his own decision. Anne knew where his brother lived. Suppose Anne (not knowing where else to find him) appeared at his brother’s house, and claimed him in the presence of Mrs. Glenarm? He gave orders to have the messenger kept waiting, and said he would send back a written reply.

“From Craig Fernie?” asked Arnold, pointing to the letter in his friend’s hand.

Geoffrey looked up with a frown. He had just opened his lips to answer that ill-timed reference to Anne in no very friendly terms, when a voice, calling to Arnold from the lawn outside, announced the appearance of a third person in the library, and warned the two gentlemen that their private interview was at an end.

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## CHAPTER THE EIGHTEENTH. .

## NEARER STILL.

BLANCHE stepped lightly into the room, through one of the open French windows.

"What are you doing here?" she said to Arnold.

"Nothing. I was just going to look for you in the garden."

"The garden is insufferable this morning." Saying those words, she fanned herself with her handkerchief, and noticed Geoffrey's presence in the room with a look of very thinly concealed annoyance at the discovery. "Wait till I am married!" she thought. "Mr. Delamayn will be cleverer than I take him to be, if he gets much of his friend's company *then*!"

"A trifle too hot—eh?" said Geoffrey, seeing her eyes fixed on him, and supposing that he was expected to say something.

Having performed that duty, he walked away without waiting for a reply; and seated himself, with his letter, at one of the writing-tables in the library.

"Sir Patrick is quite right about the young men of the present day," said Blanche, turning to Arnold. "Here is this one asks me a question, and doesn't wait for an answer. There are three more of them out in the garden, who have been talking of nothing, for the last hour, but the pedigrees of horses and the muscles of men.

When we are married, Arnold, don't present any of your male friends to me unless they have turned fifty. What shall we do till luncheon-time? It's cool and quiet in here among the books. I want a mild excitement—and I have got absolutely nothing to do. Suppose you read me some poetry?"

"While *he* is here?" asked Arnold, pointing to the personified antithesis of poetry—otherwise to Geoffrey, seated with his back to them at the further end of the library.

"Pooh!" said Blanche. "There's only an animal in the room. We needn't mind *him*!"

"I say!" exclaimed Arnold. "You're as bitter, this morning, as Sir Patrick himself. What will you say to Me when we are married, if you talk in that way of my friend?"

Blanche stole her hand into Arnold's hand, and gave it a little significant squeeze. "I shall always be nice to *you*," she whispered—with a look that contained a host of pretty promises in itself. Arnold returned the look (Geoffrey was unquestionably in the way!). Their eyes met tenderly (why couldn't the great awkward brute write his letters somewhere else?). With a faint little sigh, Blanche dropped resignedly into one of the comfortable arm-chairs—and asked once more for "some poetry," in a voice that faltered softly, and with a color that was brighter than usual.

"Whose poetry am I to read?" inquired Arnold.

"Anybody's," said Blanche. "This is an-



other of my impulses. I am dying for some poetry. I don't know whose poetry. And I don't know why."

Arnold went straight to the nearest bookshelf, and took down the first volume that his hand lighted on—a solid quarto, bound in sober brown.

"Well?" asked Blanche. "What have you found?"

Arnold opened the volume, and conscientiously read the title exactly as it stood:

"'Paradise Lost. A Poem. By John Milton.'"

"I have never read Milton," said Blanche. "Have you?"

"No."

"Another instance of sympathy between us. No educated person ought to be ignorant of Milton. Let us be educated persons. Please begin."

"At the beginning?"

"Of course! Stop! You mustn't sit all that way off—you must sit where I can look at you. My attention wanders if I don't look at people while they read."

Arnold took a stool at Blanche's feet, and opened the "First Book" of *Paradise Lost*. His "system" as a reader of blank verse was simplicity itself. In poetry we are some of us (as many living poets can testify) all for sound; and some of us (as few living poets can testify) all for sense. Arnold was for sound. He ended every line inexorably with a full stop; and he

got on to his full stop as fast as the inevitable impediment of the words would let him. He began:

“Of Man’s first disobedience and the fruit.  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste.  
Brought death into the world and all our woe.  
With loss of Eden till one greater Man.  
Restore us and regain the blissful seat.  
Sing heavenly Muse—”

“Beautiful!” said Blanche. “What a shame it seems to have had Milton all this time in the library and never to have read him yet! We will have Mornings with Milton, Arnold. He seems long; but we are both young, and we *may* live to get to the end of him. Do you know, dear, now I look at you again, you don’t seem to have come back to Windygates in good spirits?”

“Don’t I? I can’t account for it.”

“I can. It’s sympathy with Me. I am out of spirits too.”

“You!”

“Yes. After what I saw at Craig Fernie, I grow more and more uneasy about Anne. You will understand that, I am sure, after what I told you this morning?”

Arnold looked back in a violent hurry, from Blanche to Milton. That renewed reference to events at Craig Fernie was a renewed reproach to him for his conduct at the inn. He attempted to silence her by pointing to Geoffrey.

“Don’t forget,” he whispered, “that there is somebody in the room besides ourselves.”

Blanche shrugged her shoulders contemptuously.

"What does *he* matter?" she asked. "What does *he* know or care about Anne?"

There was only one other chance of diverting her from the delicate subject. Arnold went on reading headlong, two lines in advance of the place at which he had left off, with more sound and less sense than ever:

"In the beginning how the heavens and earth.  
Rose out of Chaos or if Sion hill—"

At "Sion hill," Blanche interrupted him again.

"Do wait a little, Arnold. I can't have Milton crammed down my throat in that way. Besides, I had something to say. Did I tell you that I consulted my uncle about Anne? I don't think I did. I caught him alone in this very room. I told him all I have told you. I showed him Anne's letter. And I said, 'What do you think?' He took a little time (and a great deal of snuff) before he would say what he thought. When he did speak, he told me I might quite possibly be right in suspecting Anne's husband to be a very abominable person. His keeping himself out of my way was (just as I thought) a suspicious circumstance, to begin with. And then there was the sudden extinguishing of the candles, when I first went in. I thought (and Mrs. Inchbore thought) it was done by the wind. Sir Patrick suspects it was done by the horrid man himself, to prevent me from seeing him

when I entered the room. I am firmly persuaded Sir Patrick is right. What do *you* think?"

"I think we had better go on," said Arnold, with his head down over his book. "We seem to be forgetting Milton."

"How you do worry about Milton! That last bit wasn't as interesting as the other. Is there any love in *Paradise Lost*?"

"Perhaps we may find some if we go on."

"Very well, then. Go on. And be quick about it."

Arnold was so quick about it that he lost his place. Instead of going on he went back. He read once more:

"In the beginning how the heavens and earth.  
Rose out of Chaos or if Sion hill—"

"You read that before," said Blanche.

"I think not."

"I'm sure you did. When you said 'Sion hill' I recollect I thought of the Methodists directly. I couldn't have thought of the Methodists if you hadn't said 'Sion hill.' It stands to reason."

"I'll try the next page," said Arnold. "I can't have read that before—for I haven't turned over yet."

Blanche drew herself back in her chair, and flung her handkerchief resignedly over her face. "The flies," she explained. "I'm not going to sleep. Try the next page. Oh, dear me, try the next page!"

Arnold proceeded:

"Say first for heaven hides nothing from thy view.  
Nor the deep tract of hell say first what cause.  
Moved our grand parents in that happy state—"

Blanche suddenly threw the handkerchief off again, and sat bolt upright in her chair. "Shut it up," she cried. "I can't bear any more. Leave off, Arnold—leave off!"

"What's the matter now?"

" 'That happy state,' " said Blanche. "What does 'that happy state' mean? Marriage, of course! And marriage reminds me of Anne. I won't have any more. Paradise Lost is painful. Shut it up. Well, my next question to Sir Patrick was, of course, to know what he thought Anne's husband had done. The wretch had behaved infamously to her in some way. In what way? Was it anything to do with her marriage? My uncle considered again. He thought it quite possible. Private marriages were dangerous things (he said)—especially in Scotland. He asked me if they were married in Scotland. I couldn't tell him—I only said, 'Suppose they were? What then?' 'It's barely possible, in that case,' says Sir Patrick, 'that Miss Silvester may be feeling uneasy about her marriage. She may even have reason—or may think she has reason—to doubt whether it is a marriage at all.' "

Arnold started, and looked round at Geoffrey still sitting at the writing-table with his back turned on them. Utterly as Blanche and Sir Patrick were mistaken in their estimate of Anne's position at Craig Fernie, they had

drifted, nevertheless, into discussing the very question in which Geoffrey and Miss Silvester were interested—the question of marriage in Scotland. It was impossible in Blanche's presence to tell Geoffrey that he might do well to listen to Sir Patrick's opinion, even at second-hand. Perhaps the words had found their way to him? perhaps he was listening already, of his own accord?

(He *was* listening. Blanche's last words had found their way to him, while he was pondering over his half-finished letter to his brother. He waited to hear more—without moving, and with the pen suspended in his hand.)

Blanche proceeded, absently winding her fingers in and out of Arnold's hair as he sat at her feet:

“It flashed on me instantly that Sir Patrick had discovered the truth. Of course I told him so. He laughed, and said I mustn't jump at conclusions. We were guessing quite in the dark; and all the distressing things I had noticed at the inn might admit of some totally different explanation. He would have gone on splitting straws in that provoking way the whole morning if I hadn't stopped him. I was strictly logical. I said *I* had seen Anne, and *he* hadn't—and that made all the difference. I said, ‘Everything that puzzled and frightened me in the poor darling is accounted for now. The law must, and shall, reach that man, uncle—and I'll pay for it!’ I was so much in earnest that I believe I cried a little. What do you

think the dear old man did? He took me on his knee and gave me a kiss; and he said, in the nicest way, that he would adopt my view, for the present, if I would promise not to cry any more; and—wait! the cream of it is to come!—that he would put the view in quite a new light to me as soon as I was composed again. You may imagine how soon I dried my eyes, and what a picture of composure I presented in the course of half a minute. ‘Let us take it for granted,’ says Sir Patrick, ‘that this man unknown has really tried to deceive Miss Silvester, as you and I suppose. I can tell you one thing: it’s as likely as not that, in trying to overreach *her*, he may (without in the least suspecting it) have ended in overreaching himself.’ ”

(Geoffrey held his breath. The pen dropped unheeded from his fingers. It was coming! The light that his brother couldn’t throw on the subject was dawning on it at last!)

Blanche resumed:

“I was so interested, and it made such a tremendous impression on me, that I haven’t forgotten a word. ‘I mustn’t make that poor little head of yours ache with Scotch law,’ my uncle said; ‘I must put it plainly. There are marriages allowed in Scotland, Blanche, which are called Irregular Marriages—and very abominable things they are. But they have this accidental merit in the present case. It is extremely difficult for a man to pretend to marry in Scotland, and not really to do it. And it is, on the other hand, extremely easy for a man to drift



into marrying in Scotland without feeling the slightest suspicion of having done it himself.' That was exactly what he said, Arnold. When *we* are married, it shan't be in Scotland!"

(Geoffrey's ruddy color paled. If this was true, he might be caught himself in the trap which he had schemed to set for Anne! Blanche went on with her narrative. He waited and listened.)

"My uncle asked me if I understood him so far. It was as plain as the sun at noonday; of course I understood him! 'Very well, then—now for the application!' says Sir Patrick. 'Once more supposing our guess to be the right one, Miss Silvester may be making herself very unhappy without any real cause. If this invisible man at Craig Fernie has actually meddled, I won't say with marrying her, but only with pretending to make her his wife, and if he has attempted it in Scotland, the chances are nine to one (though *he* may not believe it, and though *she* may not believe it) that he has really married her, after all.' My uncle's own words again! Quite needless to say that, half an hour after they were out of his lips, I had sent them to Craig Fernie in a letter to Anne!"

(Geoffrey's stolidly-staring eyes suddenly brightened. A light of the devil's own striking illuminated him. An idea of the devil's own bringing entered his mind. He looked stealthily round at the man whose life he had saved—at the man who had devotedly served him in return. A hideous cunning leered at his mouth

and peeped out of his eyes. "Arnold Brinkworth pretended to be married to her at the inn. By the lord Harry! that's a way out of it that never struck me before!" With that thought in his heart he turned back again to his half-finished letter to Julius. For once in his life he was strongly, fiercely agitated. For once in his life he was daunted—and that by his own thought! He had written to Julius under a strong sense of the necessity of gaining time to delude Anne into leaving Scotland before he ventured on paying his addresses to Mrs. Glenarm. His letter contained a string of clumsy excuses, intended to delay his return to his brother's house. "No," he said to himself, as he read it again. "Whatever else may do—*this* won't!" He looked round once more at Arnold, and slowly tore the letter into fragments as he looked.)

In the meantime Blanche had not done yet. "No," she said, when Arnold proposed an adjournment to the garden; "I have something more to say, and you are interested in it this time." Arnold resigned himself to listen, and, worse still, to answer, if there was no help for it, in the character of an innocent stranger who had never been near the Craig Fernie inn.

"Well," Blanche resumed, "and what do you think has come of my letter to Anne?"

"I'm sure I don't know."

"Nothing has come of it!"

"Indeed?"

"Absolutely nothing! I know she received

the letter yesterday morning. I ought to have had the answer to-day at breakfast."

"Perhaps she thought it didn't require an answer."

"She couldn't have thought that, for reasons that I know of. Besides, in my letter yesterday, I implored her to tell me (if it was one line only) whether, in guessing at what her trouble was, Sir Patrick and I had not guessed right. And here is the day getting on, and no answer! What am I to conclude?"

"I really can't say!"

"Is it possible, Arnold, that we have *not* guessed right, after all? Is the wickedness of that man who blew the candles out wickedness beyond our discovering? The doubt is so dreadful that I have made up my mind not to bear it after to-day. I count on your sympathy and assistance when to-morrow comes!"

Arnold's heart sank. Some new complication was evidently gathering round him. He waited in silence to hear the worst. Blanche bent forward, and whispered to him.

"This is a secret," she said. "If that creature at the writing-table has ears for anything but rowing and racing, he mustn't hear this! Anne may come to me privately to-day while you are all at luncheon. If she doesn't come, and if I don't hear from her, then the mystery of her silence must be cleared up; and You must do it!"

"I!"

"Don't make difficulties! If you can't find

your way to Craig Fernie, I can help you. As for Anne, you know what a charming person she is, and you know she will receive you perfectly, for my sake. I must and will have some news of her. I can't break the laws of the household a second time. Sir Patrick sympathizes, but he won't stir. Lady Lundie is a bitter enemy. The servants are threatened with the loss of their places if any one of them goes near Anne. There is nobody but you. And to Anne you go to-morrow, if I don't see her or hear from her to-day!"

This to the man who had passed as Anne's husband at the inn, and who had been forced into the most intimate knowledge of Anne's miserable secret! Arnold rose to put Milton away, with the composure of sheer despair. Any other secret he might, in the last resort, have confided to the discretion of a third person. But a woman's secret—with a woman's reputation depending on his keeping it—was not to be confided to anybody, under any stress of circumstances whatever. "If Geoffrey doesn't get me out of *this*," he thought, "I shall have no choice but to leave Windygates to-morrow."

As he replaced the book on the shelf, Lady Lundie entered the library from the garden.

"What are you doing here?" she said to her step-daughter.

"Improving my mind," replied Blanche. "Mr. Brinkworth and I have been reading Milton."

"Can you condescend so far, after reading

Milton all the morning, as to help me with the invitations for the dinner next week?"

"If *you* can condescend, Lady Lundie, after feeding the poultry all the morning, I must be humility itself after only reading Milton!"

With that little interchange of the acid amenities of feminine intercourse, stepmother and stepdaughter withdrew to a writing-table, to put the virtue of hospitality in practice together.

Arnold joined his friend at the other end of the library.

Geoffrey was sitting with his elbows on the desk and his clinched fists dug into his cheeks. Great drops of perspiration stood on his forehead, and the fragments of a torn letter lay scattered all round him. He exhibited symptoms of nervous sensibility for the first time in his life—he started when Arnold spoke to him.

"What's the matter, Geoffrey?"

"A letter to answer. And I don't know how."

"From Miss Silvester?" asked Arnold, dropping his voice so as to prevent the ladies at the other end of the room from hearing him.

"No," answered Geoffrey, in a lower voice still.

"Have you heard what Blanche has been saying to me about Miss Silvester?"

"Some of it."

"Did you hear Blanche say that she meant to send me to Craig Fernie to-morrow, if she failed to get news from Miss Silvester to-day?"

"No."

"Then you know it now. That is what Blanche has just said to me."

"Well?"

"Well—there's a limit to what a man can expect even from his best friend. I hope you won't ask me to be Blanche's messenger to-morrow. I can't and won't go back to the inn as things are now."

"You have had enough of it—eh?"

"I have had enough of distressing Miss Silvester, and more than enough of deceiving Blanche."

"What do you mean by 'distressing Miss Silvester?'"

"She doesn't take the same easy view that you and I do, Geoffrey, of my passing her off on the people of the inn as my wife."

Geoffrey absently took up a paper-knife. Still with his head down, he began shaving off the topmost layer of paper from the blotting-pad under his hand. Still with his head down, he abruptly broke the silence in a whisper.

"I say!"

"Yes?"

"How did you manage to pass her off as your wife?"

"I told you how, as we were driving from the station here."

"I was thinking of something else. Tell me again."

Arnold told him once more what had happened at the inn. Geoffrey listened, without making any remark. He balanced the paper-knife va-

cantly on one of his fingers. He was strangely sluggish and strangely silent.

"All *that* is done and ended," said Arnold, shaking him by the shoulder. "It rests with you now to get me out of the difficulty I'm placed in with Blanche. Things must be settled with Miss Silvester to-day."

"Things *shall* be settled."

"Shall be? What are you waiting for?"

"I'm waiting to do what you told me."

"What I told you?"

"Didn't you tell me to consult Sir Patrick before I married her?"

"To be sure! so I did."

"Well—I am waiting for a chance with Sir Patrick."

"And then?"

"And then—" He looked at Arnold for the first time. "Then," he said, "you may consider it settled."

"The marriage?"

He suddenly looked down again at the blotting-pad. "Yes—the marriage."

Arnold offered his hand in congratulation. Geoffrey never noticed it. His eyes were off the blotting-pad again. He was looking out of the window near him.

"Don't I hear voices outside?" he asked.

"I believe our friends are in the garden," said Arnold. "Sir Patrick may be among them. I'll go and see."

The instant his back was turned Geoffrey snatched up a sheet of note-paper. "Before I



forget it!" he said to himself. He wrote the word "Memorandum" at the top of the page, and added these lines beneath it:

"He asked for her by the name of his wife at the door. He said, at dinner, before the landlady and the waiter, 'I take these rooms for my wife.' He made *her* say he was her husband at the same time. After that he stopped all night. What do the lawyers call this in Scotland?—(Query: a marriage?)"

After folding up the paper, he hesitated for a moment. "No!" he thought. "It won't do to trust to what Miss Lundie said about it. I can't be certain till I have consulted Sir Patrick himself."

He put the paper away in his pocket, and wiped the heavy perspiration from his forehead. He was pale—for *him*, strikingly pale—when Arnold came back.

"Anything wrong, Geoffrey?—you're as white as ashes."

"It's the heat. Where's Sir Patrick?"

"You may see for yourself."

Arnold pointed to the window. Sir Patrick was crossing the lawn, on his way to the library, with a newspaper in his hand; and the guests at Windygates were accompanying him. Sir Patrick was smiling, and saying nothing. The guests were talking excitedly at the top of their voices. There had apparently been a collision of some kind between the old school and the new. Arnold directed Geoffrey's attention to the state of affairs on the lawn.

"How are you to consult Sir Patrick with all those people about him?"

"I'll consult Sir Patrick, if I take him by the scruff of the neck and carry him into the next county!" He rose to his feet as he spoke those words, and emphasized them under his breath with an oath.

Sir Patrick entered the library, with the guests at his heels.

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## CHAPTER THE NINETEENTH.

### CLOSE ON IT.

THE object of the invasion of the library by the party in the garden appeared to be twofold.

Sir Patrick had entered the room to restore the newspaper to the place from which he had taken it. The guests, to the number of five, had followed him, to appeal in a body to Geoffrey Delamayn. Between these two apparently dissimilar motives there was a connection, not visible on the surface, which was now to assert itself.

Of the five guests, two were middle-aged gentlemen belonging to that large, but indistinct, division of the human family whom the hand of Nature has painted in unobtrusive neutral tint. They had absorbed the ideas of their time with such receptive capacity as they possessed; and they occupied much the same place in society which the chorus in an opera occupies

on the stage. They echoed the prevalent sentiment of the moment; and they gave the solo-talker time to fetch his breath.

The three remaining guests were on the right side of thirty. All profoundly versed in horse-racing, in athletic sports, in pipes, beer, billiards, and betting. All profoundly ignorant of everything else under the sun. All gentlemen by birth, and all marked as such by the stamp of "a University education." They may be personally described as faint reflections of Geoffrey; and they may be numerically distinguished (in the absence of all other distinction) as One, Two, and Three.

Sir Patrick laid the newspaper on the table and placed himself in one of the comfortable arm-chairs. He was instantly assailed, in his domestic capacity, by his irrepressible sister-in-law. Lady Lundie dispatched Blanche to him with the list of her guests at the dinner. "For your uncle's approval, my dear, as head of the family."

While Sir Patrick was looking over the list, and while Arnold was making his way to Blanche, at the back of her uncle's chair, One, Two, and Three—with the Chorus in attendance on them—descended in a body on Geoffrey, at the other end of the room, and appealed in rapid succession to his superior authority, as follows:

"I say, Delamayn. We want You. Here is Sir Patrick running a regular Muck at us. Calls us aboriginal Britons. Tells us we ain't educated. Doubts if we could read, write and ci-

pher, if he tried us. Swears he's sick of fellows showing their arms and legs, and seeing which fellow's hardest, and who's got three belts of muscle across his wind, and who hasn't, and the like of that. Says a most infernal thing of a chap. Says—because a chap likes a healthy out-of-door life, and trains for rowing and running, and the rest of it, and don't see his way to stewing over his books—*therefore* he's safe to commit all the crimes in the calendar, murder included. Saw your name down in the newspaper for the Foot-race; and said, when we asked him if he'd taken the odds, he'd lay any odds we liked against you in the other Race at the University—meaning, old boy, your Degree. Nasty, that about the Degree—in the opinion of Number One. Bad taste in Sir Patrick to rake up what we never mention among ourselves—in the opinion of Number Two. Un-English to sneer at a man in that way behind his back—in the opinion of Number Three. Bring him to book, Delamayn. Your name's in the papers; he can't ride rough-shod over You."

The two choral gentlemen agreed (in the minor key) with the general opinion. "Sir Patrick's views are certainly extreme, Smith?" "I think, Jones, it's desirable to hear Mr. Delamayn on the other side."

Geoffrey looked from one to the other of his admirers with an expression on his face which was quite new to them, and with something in his manner which puzzled them all.

"You can't argue with Sir Patrick your-

selves," he said, "and you want me to do it?"

One, Two, Three and the Chorus all answered, "Yes."

"I won't do it."

One, Two, Three and the Chorus all asked "Why?"

"Because," answered Geoffrey, "you're all wrong. And Sir Patrick's right."

Not astonishment only, but downright stupefaction, struck the deputation from the garden speechless.

Without saying a word more to any of the persons standing near him, Geoffrey walked straight up to Sir Patrick's arm-chair, and personally addressed him. The satellites followed, and listened (as well they might) in wonder.

"You will lay any odds, sir," said Geoffrey, "against me taking my Degree? You're quite right. I shan't take my Degree. You doubt whether I, or any of those fellows behind me, could read, write and cipher correctly, if you tried us. You're right again—we couldn't. You say you don't know why men like Me, and men like Them, may not begin with rowing and running, and the like of that, and end in committing all the crimes in the calendar, murder included. Well! you may be right again there. Whose to know what may happen to him? or what he may not end in doing before he dies? It may be Another, or it may be Me. How do I know? and how do you?" He suddenly turned on the deputation, standing thunderstruck be-

hind him. "If you want to know what I think, there it is for you, in plain words."

There was something, not only in the shamelessness of the declaration itself, but in the fierce pleasure that the speaker seemed to feel in making it, which struck the circle of listeners, Sir Patrick included, with a momentary chill.

In the midst of the silence a sixth guest appeared on the lawn, and stepped into the library—a silent, resolute, unassuming, elderly man, who had arrived the day before on a visit to Windygates, and who was well known, in and out of London, as one of the first consulting surgeons of his time.

"A discussion going on?" he asked. "Am I in the way?"

"There's no discussion—we are all agreed," cried Geoffrey, answering boisterously for the rest. "The more the merrier, sir!"

After a glance at Geoffrey the surgeon suddenly checked himself on the point of advancing to the inner part of the room, and remained standing at the window.

"I beg your pardon," said Sir Patrick, addressing himself to Geoffrey, with a grave dignity which was quite new in Arnold's experience of him. "We are *not* all agreed. I decline, Mr. Delamayn, to allow you to connect me with such an expression of feeling on your part as we have just heard. The language you have used leaves me no alternative but to meet your statement of what you suppose me to have said by my statement of what I really did say. It is

not my fault if the discussion in the garden is revived before another audience in this room—it is yours.”

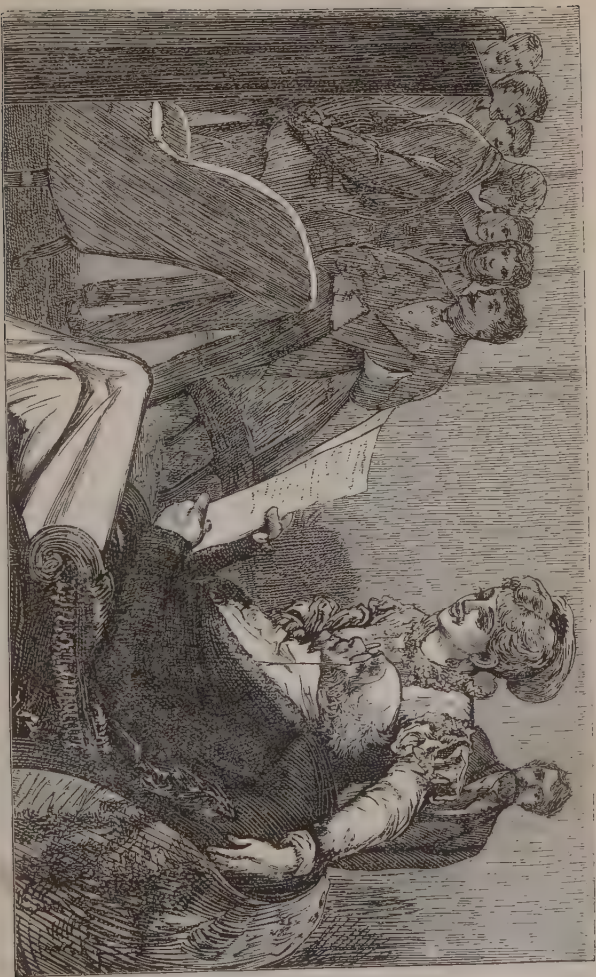
He looked, as he spoke, to Arnold and Blanche, and from them to the surgeon standing at the window.

The surgeon had found an occupation for himself which completely isolated him among the rest of the guests. Keeping his own face in shadow, he was studying Geoffrey's face, in the full flood of light that fell on it, with a steady attention which must have been generally remarked, if all eyes had not been turned toward Sir Patrick at the time.

It was not an easy face to investigate at that moment.

While Sir Patrick had been speaking Geoffrey had seated himself near the window, doggedly impenetrable to the reproof of which he was the object. In his impatience to consult the one authority competent to decide the question of Arnold's position toward Anne, he had sided with Sir Patrick, as a means of ridding himself of the unwelcome presence of his friends—and he had defeated his own purpose, thanks to his own brutish incapability of bridling himself in the pursuit of it. Whether he was now discouraged under these circumstances, or whether he was simply resigned to bide his time till his time came, it was impossible, judging by outward appearances, to say. With a heavy dropping at the corners of his mouth, with a stolid indifference staring dull in his eyes, there he sat, a man





SIR PATRICK TOOK UP THE NEWSPAPER.

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 289.



forearmed, in his own obstinate neutrality, against all temptation to engage in the conflict of opinions that was to come.

Sir Patrick took up the newspaper which he had brought in from the garden, and looked once more to see if the surgeon was attending to him.

No! The surgeon's attention was absorbed in his own subject. There he was in the same position, with his mind still hard at work on something in Geoffrey which at once interested and puzzled it! "That man," he was thinking to himself, "has come here this morning after traveling from London all night. Does any ordinary fatigue explain what I see in his face? No!"

"Our little discussion in the garden," resumed Sir Patrick, answering Blanche's inquiring look as she bent over him, "began, my dear, in a paragraph here announcing Mr. Delamayn's forthcoming appearance in a foot-race in the neighborhood of London. I hold very unpopular opinions as to the athletic displays which are so much in vogue in England just now. And it is possible that I may have expressed those opinions a little too strongly, in the heat of discussion, with gentlemen who are opposed to me—I don't doubt, conscientiously opposed—on this question."

A low groan of protest rose from One, Two and Three, in return for the little compliment which Sir Patrick had paid to them. "How about rowing and running ending in the Old

Bailey and the gallows? You said that, sir—you know you did!”

The two choral gentlemen looked at each other, and agreed with the prevalent sentiment. “It came to that, I think, Smith.” “Yes, Jones, it certainly came to that.”

The only two men who still cared nothing about it were Geoffrey and the surgeon. There sat the first, stolidly neutral—indifferent alike to the attack and the defense. There stood the second, pursuing his investigation—with the growing interest in it of a man who was beginning to see his way to the end.

“Hear my defense, gentlemen,” continued Sir Patrick, as courteously as ever. “You belong, remember, to a nation which especially claims to practice the rules of fair play. I must beg to remind you of what I said in the garden. I started with a concession. I admitted—as every person of the smallest sense must admit—that a man will, in the great majority of cases, be all the fitter for mental exercise if he wisely combines physical exercise along with it. The whole question between the two is a question of proportion and degree; and my complaint of the present time is that the present time doesn’t see it. Popular opinion in England seems to me to be not only getting to consider the cultivation of the muscles as of equal importance with the cultivation of the mind, but to be actually extending—in practice, if not in theory—to the absurd and dangerous length of putting bodily training in the first place of importance, and

mental training in the second. To take a case in point: I can discover no enthusiasm in the nation anything like so genuine and anything like so general as the enthusiasm excited by your University boat-race. Again: I see this Athletic Education of yours made a matter of public celebration in schools and colleges; and I ask any unprejudiced witness to tell me which excites most popular enthusiasm, and which gets the most prominent place in the public journals—the exhibition, indoors (on Prize-day), of what the boys can do with their minds? or the exhibition, out-of-doors (on Sports-day), of what the boys can do with their bodies? You know perfectly well which performance excites the loudest cheers, which occupies the prominent place in the newspapers, and which, as a necessary consequence, confers the highest social honors on the hero of the day.”

Another murmur from One, Two and Three. “We have nothing to say to that, sir; have it all your own way, so far.”

Another ratification of agreement with the prevalent opinion between Smith and Jones.

“Very good,” pursued Sir Patrick. “We are all of one mind as to which way the public feeling sets. If it is a feeling to be respected and encouraged, show me the national advantage which has resulted from it. Where is the influence of this modern outburst of manly enthusiasm on the serious concerns of life? and how has it improved the character of the people at large? Are we any of us individually readier

than we ever were to sacrifice our own little private interests to the public good? Are we dealing with the serious social questions of our time in a conspicuously determined, downright and definite way? Are we becoming a visibly and indisputably purer people in our code of commercial morals? Is there a healthier and higher tone in those public amusements which faithfully reflect in all countries the public taste? Produce me affirmative answers to these questions, which rest on solid proof, and I'll accept the present mania for athletic sports as something better than an outbreak of our insular boastfulness and our insular barbarity in a new form."

"Question! question!" in a general cry, from One, Two and Three.

"Question! question!" in meek reverberation, from Smith and Jones.

"That *is* the question," rejoined Sir Patrick. "You admit the existence of the public feeling; and I ask, what good does it do?"

"What harm does it do?" from One, Two and Three.

"Hear! hear!" from Smith and Jones.

"That's a fair challenge," replied Sir Patrick. "I am bound to meet you on that new ground. I won't point, gentlemen, by way of answer, to the coarseness which I can see growing on our national manners, or to the deterioration which appears to me to be spreading more and more widely in our national tastes. You may tell me with perfect truth that I am too old a man to be a fair judge of manners and tastes



which have got beyond my standards. We will try the issue, as it now stands between us, on its abstract merits only. I assert that a state of public feeling which does practically place physical training, in its estimation, above moral and mental training, is a positively bad and dangerous state of feeling in this, that it encourages the inbred reluctance in humanity to submit to the demands which moral and mental cultivation must inevitably make on it. Which am I, as a boy, naturally most ready to do—to try how high I can jump? or to try how much I can learn? Which training comes easiest to me as a young man? The training which teaches me to handle an oar? or the training which teaches me to return good for evil, and to love my neighbor as myself? Of those two experiments, of those two trainings, which ought society in England to meet with the warmest encouragement? And which does society in England practically encourage, as a matter of fact?"

"What did you say yourself just now?" from One, Two and Three.

"Remarkably well put!" from Smith and Jones.

"I said," admitted Sir Patrick, "that a man will go all the better to his books for his healthy physical exercise. And I say that again—provided the physical exercise be restrained within fit limits. But when public feeling enters into the question, and directly exalts the bodily exercises above the books—then I say public feeling is in a dangerous extreme. The bodily exer-



cises, in that case, will be uppermost in the youth's thoughts, will have the strongest hold on his interest, will take the lion's share of his time, and will, by those means—barring the few purely exceptional instances—slowly and surely end in leaving him, to all good moral and mental purpose, certainly an uncultivated, and, possibly, a dangerous man.”

A cry from the camp of the adversaries: “He’s got to it at last! A man who leads an out-of-door life, and uses the strength that God has given to him, is a dangerous man. Did anybody ever hear the like of that?”

Cry reverberated, with variations, by the two human echoes: “No! Nobody ever heard the like of that!”

“Clear your minds of cant, gentlemen,” answered Sir Patrick. “The agricultural laborer leads an out-of-door life, and uses the strength that God has given to him. The sailor in the merchant service does the same. Both are an uncultivated, a shamefully uncultivated, class—and see the result! Look at the Map of Crime, and you will find the most hideous offenses in the calendar, committed—not in the towns, where the average man doesn’t lead an out-of-door life, doesn’t, as a rule, use his strength, but *is*, as a rule, comparatively cultivated—not in the towns, but in the agricultural districts. As for the English sailor—except when the Royal Navy catches and cultivates him—ask Mr. Brinkworth, who has served in the merchant navy, what sort of specimen of the moral influ-

ence of out-of-door life and muscular cultivation *he is.*"

"In nine cases out of ten," said Arnold, "he is as idle and vicious a ruffian as walks the earth."

Another cry from the Opposition: "Are *we* agricultural laborers? Are *we* sailors in the merchant service?"

A smart reverberation from the human echoes: "Smith! am I a laborer?" "Jones! am I a sailor?"

"Pray let us not be personal, gentlemen," said Sir Patrick. "I am speaking generally; and I can only meet extreme objections by pushing my argument to extreme limits. The laborer and the sailor have served my purpose. If the laborer and the sailor offend you, by all means let them walk off the stage! I hold to the position which I advanced just now. A man may be well born, well off, well dressed, well fed—but if he is an uncultivated man, he is (in spite of all those advantages) a man with special capacities for evil in him, on that very account. Don't mistake me! I am far from saying that the present rage for exclusively muscular accomplishments must lead inevitably downward to the lowest deep of depravity. Fortunately for society, all special depravity is more or less certainly the result, in the first instance, of special temptation. The ordinary mass of us, thank God! pass through life without being exposed to other than ordinary temptations. Thousands of the young gentlemen, devoted to the favorite pursuits of the

present time, will get through existence with no worse consequences to themselves than a coarse tone of mind and manners, and a lamentable incapability of feeling any of those higher and gentler influences which sweeten and purify the lives of more cultivated men. But take the other case (which may occur to anybody), the case of a special temptation trying a modern young man of your prosperous class and of mine. And let me beg Mr. Delamayn to honor with his attention what I have now to say, because it refers to the opinion which I did really express—as distinguished from the opinion which he affects to agree with, and which I never advanced.”

Geoffrey's indifference showed no signs of giving way. “Go on!” he said—and still sat looking straight before him, with heavy eyes, which noticed nothing, and expressed nothing.

“Take the example which we have now in view,” pursued Sir Patrick—“the example of an average young gentleman of our time, blessed with every advantage that physical cultivation can bestow on him. Let this man be tried by a temptation which insidiously calls into action, in his own interests, the savage instincts latent in humanity—the instincts of self-seeking and cruelty which are at the bottom of all crime. Let this man be placed toward some other person, guiltless of injuring him, in a position which demands one of two sacrifices—the sacrifice of the other person, or the sacrifice of his own interests and his own desires. His neighbor's

happiness, or his neighbor's life, stands, let us say, between him and the attainment of something that he wants. He can wreck the happiness, or strike down the life, without, to his knowledge, any fear of suffering for it himself. What is to prevent him, being the man he is, from going straight to his end on those conditions? Will the skill in rowing, the swiftness in running, the admirable capacity and endurance in other physical exercises, which he has attained, by a strenuous cultivation in this kind that has excluded any similarly strenuous cultivation in other kinds—will these physical attainments help him to win a purely moral victory over his own selfishness and his own cruelty? They won't even help him to see that it *is* selfishness, and that it *is* cruelty. The essential principle of his rowing and racing (a harmless principle enough, if you can be sure of applying it to rowing and racing only) has taught him to take every advantage of another man that his superior strength and superior cunning can suggest. There has been nothing in his training to soften the barbarous hardness in his heart, and to enlighten the barbarous darkness in his mind. Temptation finds this man defenseless, when temptation passes his way. I don't care who he is, or how high he stands accidentally in the social scale—he is, to all moral intents and purposes, an Animal, and nothing more. If my happiness stands in his way—and if he can do it with impunity to himself—he will trample down my happiness. If my life happens to be the next obstacle

he encounters—and if he can do it with impunity to himself—he will trample down my life. Not, Mr. Delamayn, in the character of a victim to irresistible fatality, or to blind chance; but in the character of a man who has sown the seed, and reaps the harvest. That, sir, is the case which I put as an extreme case only, when this discussion began. As an extreme case only—but as a perfectly possible case, at the same time—I restate it now.”

Before the advocates of the other side of the question could open their lips to reply, Geoffrey suddenly flung off his indifference, and started to his feet.

“Stop!” he cried, threatening the others, in his fierce impatience to answer for himself, with his clinched fist.

There was a general silence.

Geoffrey turned and looked at Sir Patrick, as if Sir Patrick had personally insulted him.

“Who is this anonymous man, who finds his way to his own ends, and pities nobody and sticks at nothing?” he asked. “Give him a name!”

“I am quoting an example,” said Sir Patrick. “I am not attacking a man.”

“What right have you,” cried Geoffrey—utterly forgetful, in the strange exasperation that had seized on him, of the interest that he had in controlling himself before Sir Patrick—“what right have you to pick out an example of a rowing-man who is an infernal scoundrel—when it’s quite as likely that a rowing-man may be a good

fellow: ay! and a better fellow, if you come to that, than ever stood in your shoes!”

“If the one case is quite as likely to occur as the other (which I readily admit),” answered Sir Patrick, “I have surely a right to choose which case I please for illustration. (Wait, Mr. Delamayn! These are the last words I have to say, and I mean to say them.) I have take the example—not of a specially depraved man, as you erroneously suppose—but of an average man, with his average share of the mean, cruel, and dangerous qualities which are part and parcel of unreformed human nature—as your religion tells you, and as you may see for yourself, if you choose to look at your untaught fellow-creatures anywhere. I suppose that man to be tried by a temptation to wickedness, out of the common; and I show, to the best of my ability, how completely the moral and mental neglect of himself, which the present material tone of public feeling in England has tacitly encouraged, leaves him at the mercy of all the worst instincts in his nature; and how surely, under those conditions, he *must* go down (gentleman as he is) step by step—as the lowest vagabond in the streets goes down under *his* special temptation—from the beginning in ignorance to the end in crime. If you deny my right to take such an example as that, in illustration of the views I advocate, you must either deny that a special temptation to wickedness can assail a man in the position of a gentleman; or you must assert that gentlemen who are naturally superior to all temptation are



the only gentlemen who devote themselves to athletic pursuits. There is my defense. In stating my case, I have spoken out of my own sincere respect for the interests of virtue and of learning: out of my own sincere admiration for those young men among us who are resisting the contagion of barbarism about them. In *their* future is the future hope of England. I have done."

Angrily ready with a violent personal reply, Geoffrey found himself checked, in his turn, by another person with something to say, and with a resolution to say it at that particular moment.

For some little time past the surgeon had discontinued his steady investigation of Geoffrey's face, and had given all his attention to the discussion, with the air of a man whose self-imposed task had come to an end. As the last sentence fell from the last speaker's lips, he interposed so quickly and so skillfully between Geoffrey and Sir Patrick that Geoffrey himself was taken by surprise.

"There is something still wanting to make Sir Patrick's statement of the case complete," he said. "I think I can supply it, from the result of my own professional experience. Before I say what I have to say, Mr. Delamayn will perhaps excuse me if I venture on giving him a caution to control himself."

"Are *you* going to make a dead set at me, too?" inquired Geoffrey.

"I am recommending you to keep your tem-



per—nothing more. There are plenty of men who can fly into a passion without doing themselves any particular harm. You are not one of them?”

“What do you mean?”

“I don’t think the state of your health, Mr. Delamayn, is quite so satisfactory as you may be disposed to consider it yourself.”

Geoffrey turned to his admirers and adherents with a roar of derisive laughter. The admirers and adherents all echoed him together. Arnold and Blanche smiled at each other. Even Sir Patrick looked as if he could hardly credit the evidence of his own ears. There stood the modern Hercules, self-vindicated as a Hercules, before all eyes that looked at him. And there, opposite, stood a man whom he could have killed with one blow of his first, telling him, in serious earnest, that he was not in perfect health!

“You are a rare fellow!” said Geoffrey, half in jest and half in anger. “What’s the matter with me?”

“I have undertaken to give you what I believe to be a necessary caution,” answered the surgeon. “I have *not* undertaken to tell you what I think is the matter with you. That may be a question for consideration some little time hence. In the meanwhile, I should like to put my impression about you to the test. Have you any objection to answer a question on a matter of no particular importance relating to yourself?”

“Let’s hear the question first.”

“I have noticed something in your behavior

while Sir Patrick was speaking. You are as much interested in opposing his views as any of those gentlemen about you. I don't understand your sitting in silence, and leaving it entirely to the others to put the case on your side—until Sir Patrick said something which happened to irritate you. Had you, all the time before that, no answer ready in your own mind?"

"I had as good answers in my mind as any that have been made here to-day."

"And yet you didn't give them?"

"No; I didn't give them."

"Perhaps you felt—though you knew your objections to be good ones—that it was hardly worth while to take the trouble of putting them into words? In short, you let your friends answer for you, rather than make the effort of answering for yourself?"

Geoffrey looked at his medical adviser with a sudden curiosity and a sudden distrust.

"I say," he asked, "how do you come to know what's going on in my mind—without my telling you of it?"

"It is my business to find out what is going on in people's bodies—and to do that it is sometimes necessary for me to find out (if I can) what is going on in their minds. If I have rightly interpreted what was going on in *your* mind, there is no need for me to press my question. You have answered it already."

He turned to Sir Patrick next.

"There is a side to this subject," he said, "which you have not touched on yet. There is

a Physical objection to the present rage for muscular exercises of all sorts, which is quite as strong, in its way, as the Moral objection. You have stated the consequences as they *may* affect the mind. I can state the consequences as they *do* affect the body."

"From your own experience?"

"From my own experience. I can tell you, as a medical man, that a proportion, and not by any means a small one, of the young men who are now putting themselves to violent athletic tests of their strength and endurance, are taking that course to the serious and permanent injury of their own health. The public who attend rowing-matches, foot-races, and other exhibitions of that sort, see nothing but the successful results of muscular training. Fathers and mothers at home see the failures. There are households in England—miserable households, to be counted, Sir Patrick, by more than ones and twos—in which there are young men who have to thank the strain laid on their constitutions by the popular physical displays of the present time, for being broken men, and invalided men, for the rest of their lives."

"Do you hear that?" said Sir Patrick, looking at Geoffrey.

Geoffrey carelessly nodded his head. His irritation had had time to subside: the stolid indifference had got possession of him again. He had resumed his chair—he sat, with outstretched legs, staring stupidly at the pattern on the carpet. "What does it matter to Me?" was the

sentiment expressed all over him, from head to foot.

The surgeon went on.

“I can see no remedy for this sad state of things,” he said, “as long as the public feeling remains what the public feeling is now. A fine healthy-looking young man, with a superb muscular development, longs (naturally enough) to distinguish himself like others. The training authorities at his college, or elsewhere, take him in hand (naturally enough again) on the strength of outward appearances. And whether they have been right or wrong in choosing him is more than they can say, until the experiment has been tried, and the mischief has been, in many cases, irretrievably done. How many of them are aware of the important physiological truth, that the muscular power of a man is no fair guarantee of his vital power? How many of them know that we all have (as a great French writer puts it) two lives in us—the surface life of the muscles, and the inner life of the heart, lungs and brain? Even if they did know this—even with medical men to help them—it would be in the last degree doubtful, in most cases, whether any previous examination would result in any reliable discovery of the vital fitness of the man to undergo the stress of muscular exertion laid on him. Apply to any of my brethren; and they will tell you, as the result of their own professional observation, that I am in no sense overstating this serious evil, or exaggerating the deplorable and dangerous consequences to which

it leads. I have a patient, at this moment, who is a young man of twenty, and who possesses one of the finest muscular developments I ever saw in my life. If that young man had consulted me before he followed the example of the other young men about him, I cannot honestly say that I could have foreseen the results. As things are, after going through a certain amount of muscular training, after performing a certain number of muscular feats, he suddenly fainted one day, to the astonishment of his family and friends. I was called in, and I have watched the case since. He will probably live, but he will never recover. I am obliged to take precautions with this youth of twenty which I should take with an old man of eighty. He is big enough and muscular enough to sit to a painter as a model for Samson—and only last week I saw him swoon away like a young girl, in his mother's arms."

"Name!" cried Geoffrey's admirers, still fighting the battle on their side, in the absence of any encouragement from Geoffrey himself.

"I am not in the habit of mentioning my patients' names," replied the surgeon. "But if you insist on my producing an example of a man broken by athletic exercises, I can do it."

"Do it! Who is he?"

"You all know him perfectly well."

"Is he in the doctor's hands?"

"Not yet."

"Where is he?"

"There!"

In a pause of breathless silence—with the eyes of every person in the room eagerly fastened on him—the surgeon lifted his hand and pointed to Geoffrey Delamayn.

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTIETH.

### TOUCHING IT.

As soon as the general stupefaction was allayed, the general incredulity asserted itself as a matter of course.

The man who first declared that “seeing” was “believing” laid his finger (whether he knew it himself or not) on one of the fundamental follies of humanity. The easiest of all evidence to receive is the evidence that requires no other judgment to decide on it than the judgment of the eye—and it will be, on that account, the evidence which humanity is most ready to credit, as long as humanity lasts. The eyes of everybody looked at Geoffrey; and the judgment of everybody decided, on the evidence there visible, that the surgeon must be wrong. Lady Lundie herself (disturbed over her dinner invitations) led the general protest. “Mr. Delamayn in broken health!” she exclaimed, appealing to the better sense of her eminent medical guest. “Really, now, you can’t expect us to believe that!”

Stung into action for the second time by the startling assertion of which he had been made

the subject, Geoffrey rose, and looked the surgeon, steadily and insolently, straight in the face.

"Do you mean what you say?" he asked.

"Yes."

"You point me out before all these people—"

"One moment, Mr. Delamayn. I admit that I may have been wrong in directing the general attention to you. You have a right to complain of my having answered too publicly the public challenge offered to me by your friends. I apologize for having done that. But I don't retract a single word of what I have said on the subject of your health."

"You stick to it that I'm a broken-down man?"

"I do."

"I wish you were twenty years younger, sir."

"Why?"

"I'd ask you to step out on the lawn there, and I'd show you whether I'm a broken-down man or not."

Lady Lundie looked at her brother-in-law. Sir Patrick instantly interfered.

"Mr. Delamayn," he said, "you were invited here in the character of a gentleman, and you are a guest in a lady's house."

"No! no!" said the surgeon, good-humoredly.

"Mr. Delamayn is using a strong argument, Sir Patrick—and that is all. If I *were* twenty years younger," he went on, addressing himself to Geoffrey, "and if I *did* step out on the lawn with you, the result wouldn't affect the question between us in the least. I don't say that the



violent bodily exercises in which you are famous have damaged your muscular power. I assert that they have damaged your vital power. In what particular way they have affected it I don't consider myself bound to tell you. I simply give you a warning, as a matter of common humanity. You will do well to be content with the success you have already achieved in the field of athletic pursuits, and to alter your mode of life for the future. Accept my excuses, once more, for having said this publicly instead of privately—and don't forget my warning."

He turned to move away to another part of the room. Geoffrey fairly forced him to return to the subject.

"Wait a bit," he said. "You have had your innings. My turn now. I can't give it words as you do; but I can come to the point. And, by the Lord, I'll fix you to it! In ten days or a fortnight from this I'm going into training for the Foot-race at Fulham. Do you say I shall break down?"

"You will probably get through your training."

"Shall I get through the race?"

"You may *possibly* get through the race. But if you do—"

"If I do?"

"You will never run another."

"And never row in another match?"

"Never."

"I have been asked to row in the Race, next spring; and I have said I will. Do you tell me,

in so many words, that I shan't be able to do it?"

"Yes—in so many words."

"Positively?"

"Positively."

"Back your opinion!" cried Geoffrey, tearing his betting-book out of his pocket. "I lay you an even hundred I'm in fit condition to row in the University Match next spring."

"I don't bet, Mr. Delamayn."

With that final reply the surgeon walked away to the other end of the library. Lady Lundie (taking Blanche in custody) withdrew, at the same time, to return to the serious business of her invitations for the dinner. Geoffrey turned defiantly, book in hand, to his college friends about him. The British blood was up; and the British resolution to bet, which successfully defies common decency and common law from one end of the country to the other, was not to be trifled with.

"Come on!" cried Geoffrey. "Back the doctor, one of you!"

Sir Patrick rose in undisguised disgust, and followed the surgeon. One, Two and Three, invited to business by their illustrious friend, shook their thick heads at him knowingly, and answered with one accord, in one eloquent word—"Gammon!"

"One of *you* back him!" persisted Geoffrey, appealing to the two choral gentlemen in the background, with his temper fast rising to fever heat. The two choral gentlemen compared notes,

as usual. "We weren't born yesterday, Smith?"  
"Not if we know it, Jones."

"Smith!" said Geoffrey, with a sudden assumption of politeness ominous of something unpleasant to come.

Smith said "Yes?"—with a smile.

"Jones!"

Jones said "Yes?"—with a reflection of Smith.

"You're a couple of infernal cads—and you haven't got a hundred pound between you!"

"Come! come!" said Arnold, interfering for the first time. "This is shameful, Geoffrey!"

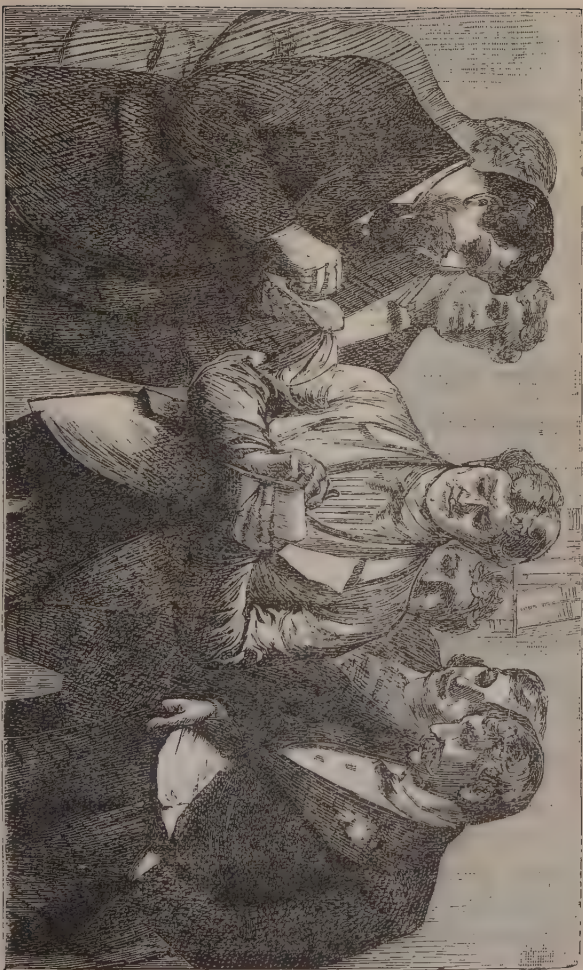
"Why the"—(never mind what!)"—"won't they any of them take the bet?"

"If you must be a fool," returned Arnold, a little irritably on his side, "and if nothing else will keep you quiet, *I'll* take the bet."

"An even hundred on the doctor!" cried Geoffrey. "Done with you!"

His highest aspirations were satisfied; his temper was in perfect order again. He entered the bet in his book; and made his excuses to Smith and Jones in the heartiest way. "No offense, old chaps! Shake hands!" The two choral gentlemen were enchanted with him. "The English aristocracy—eh, Smith?" "Blood and breeding—eh, Jones!"

As soon as he had spoken, Arnold's conscience reproached him: not for betting (who is ashamed of *that* form of gambling in England?), but for "backing the doctor." With the best intention toward his friend, he was speculating on the



AN EVEN HUNDRED ON THE DOCTOR.

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 31c.



failure of his friend's health. He anxiously assured Geoffrey that no man in the room could be more heartily persuaded that the surgeon was wrong than himself. "I don't cry off from the bet," he said. "But, my dear fellow, pray understand that I only take it to please *you*."

"Bother all that!" answered Geoffrey, with the steady eye to business, which was one of the choicest virtues of his character. "A bet's a bet—and hang your sentiment!" He drew Arnold by the arm out of ear-shot of the others. "I say!" he asked, anxiously. "Do you think I've set the old fogy's back up?"

"Do you mean Sir Patrick?"

Geoffrey nodded, and went on.

"I haven't put that little matter to him yet—about marrying in Scotland, you know. Suppose he cuts up rough with me if I try him now?"

His eye wandered cunningly, as he put the question, to the further end of the room. The surgeon was looking over a portfolio of prints. The ladies were still at work on their notes of invitation. Sir Patrick was alone at the bookshelves, immersed in a volume which he had just taken down.

"Make an apology," suggested Arnold. "Sir Patrick may be a little irritable and bitter; but he's a just man and a kind man. Say you were not guilty of any intentional disrespect toward him—and you will say enough."

"All right!"

Sir Patrick, deep in an old Venetian edition of

the Decameron, found himself suddenly recalled from mediæval Italy to modern England, by no less a person than Geoffrey Delamayn.

"What do you want?" he asked, coldly.

"I want to make an apology," said Geoffrey. "Let bygones be bygones—and that sort of thing. I wasn't guilty of any intentional disrespect toward you. Forgive and forget. Not half a bad motto, sir—eh?"

It was clumsily expressed—but still it was an apology. Not even Geoffrey could appeal to Sir Patrick's courtesy and Sir Patrick's consideration in vain.

"Not a word more, Mr. Delamayn!" said the polite old man. "Accept my excuses for anything which I may have said too sharply, on my side; and let us by all means forget the rest."

Having met the advance made to him, in those terms, he paused, expecting Geoffrey to leave him free to return to the Decameron. To his unutterable astonishment, Geoffrey suddenly stooped over him, and whispered in his ear, "I want a word in private with you."

Sir Patrick started back, as if Geoffrey had tried to bite him.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Delamayn—what did you say?"

"Could you give me a word in private?"

Sir Patrick put back the Decameron, and bowed in freezing silence. The confidence of the Honorable Geoffrey Delamayn was the last confidence in the world into which he desired to be drawn. "This is the secret of the apology!"



he thought. "What can he possibly want with Me?"

"It's about a friend of mine," pursued Geoffrey, leading the way toward one of the windows. "He's in a scrape, my friend is. And I want to ask your advice. It's strictly private, you know." There he came to a full stop—and looked to see what impression he had produced, so far.

Sir Patrick declined, either by word or gesture, to exhibit the slightest anxiety to hear a word more.

"Would you mind taking a turn in the garden?" asked Geoffrey.

Sir Patrick pointed to his lame foot. "I have had my allowance of walking this morning," he said. "Let my infirmity excuse me."

Geoffrey looked about him for a substitute for the garden, and led the way back again toward one of the convenient curtained recesses opening out of the inner wall of the library. "We shall be private enough here," he said.

Sir Patrick made a final effort to escape the proposed conference—an undisguised effort, this time.

"Pray forgive me, Mr. Delamayn. Are you quite sure that you apply to the right person in applying to *me*?"

"You're a Scoch lawyer, ain't you?"

"Certainly."

"And you understand about Scotch marriages—eh?"

Sir Patrick's manner suddenly altered.

"Is *that* the subject you wish to consult me on?" he asked.

"It's not me. It's my friend."

"Your friend, then?"

"Yes. It's a scrape with a woman. Here, in Scotland. My friend don't know whether he is married to her or not."

"I am at your service, Mr. Delamayn."

To Geoffrey's relief—by no means unmixed with surprise—Sir Patrick not only showed no further reluctance to be consulted by him, but actually advanced to meet his wishes, by leading the way to the recess that was nearest to them. The quick brain of the old lawyer had put Geoffrey's application to him for assistance, and Blanche's application to him for assistance, together: and had built its own theory on the basis thus obtained. "Do I see a connection between the present position of Blanche's governess and the present position of Mr. Delamayn's friend?" thought Sir Patrick. "Stranger extremes than *that* have met me in my experience. Something may come out of this."

The two strangely-assorted companions seated themselves, one on each side of a little table in the recess. Arnold and the other guests had idled out again on to the lawn. The surgeon with his prints, and the ladies with their invitations, were safely absorbed in a distant part of the library. The conference between the two men, so trifling in appearance, so terrible in its destined influence, not over Anne's future only, but over the future of Arnold and Blanche, was,

to all practical purposes, a conference with closed doors.

"Now," said Sir Patrick, "what is the question?"

"The question," said Geoffrey, "is whether my friend is married to her or not?"

"Did he mean to marry her?"

"No."

"He being a single man, and she being a single woman, at the time? And both in Scotland?"

"Yes."

"Very well. Now tell me the circumstances."

Geoffrey hesitated. The art of stating circumstances implies the cultivation of a very rare gift—the gift of arranging ideas. No one was better acquainted with this truth than Sir Patrick. He was purposely puzzling Geoffrey at starting, under the firm conviction that his client had something to conceal from him. The one process that could be depended on for extracting the truth, under those circumstances, was the process of interrogation. If Geoffrey was submitted to it, at the outset, his cunning might take the alarm. Sir Patrick's object was to make the man himself invite interrogation. Geoffrey invited it forthwith, by attempting to state the circumstances, and by involving them in the usual confusion. Sir Patrick waited until he had thoroughly lost the thread of his narrative—and then played for the winning trick.

"Would it be easier to you if I asked a few questions?" he inquired, innocently.

"Much easier."

"I am quite at your service. Suppose we clear the ground, to begin with? Are you at liberty to mention names?"

"No."

"Places?"

"No."

"Dates?"

"Do you want me to be particular?"

"Be as particular as you can."

"Will it do, if I say the present year?"

"Yes. Were your friend and the lady—at some time in the present year—traveling together in Scotland?"

"No."

"Living together in Scotland?"

"No."

"What *were* they doing together in Scotland?"

"Well—they were meeting each other at an inn."

"Oh? They were meeting each other at an inn. Which was first at the rendezvous?"

"The woman was first. Stop a bit! We are getting to it now." He produced from his pocket the written memorandum of Arnold's proceedings at Craig Fernie, which he had taken down from Arnold's own lips. "I've got a bit of note here," he went on. "Perhaps you'd like to have a look at it?"

Sir Patrick took the note—read it rapidly through to himself—then re-read it, sentence by sentence, to Geoffrey; using it as a text to speak from, in making further inquiries.

“ ‘He asked for her by the name of his wife, at the door,’ ” read Sir Patrick. “ ‘Meaning, I presume, the door of the inn? Had the lady previously given herself out as a married woman to the people of the inn?’ ”

“ ‘Yes.’ ”

“ ‘How long had she been at the inn before the gentleman joined her?’ ”

“ ‘Only an hour or so.’ ”

“ ‘Did she give a name?’ ”

“ ‘I can’t be quite sure—I should say not.’ ”

“ ‘Did the gentleman give a name?’ ”

“ ‘No. I’m certain *he* didn’t.’ ”

Sir Patrick returned to the memorandum.

“ ‘He said at dinner, before the landlady and the waiter, I take these rooms for my wife. He made *her* say he was her husband, at the same time.’ Was that done jocosely, Mr. Delamayn—either by the lady or the gentleman?’ ”

“ ‘No. It was done in downright earnest.’ ”

“ ‘You mean it was done to look like earnest, and so to deceive the landlady and the waiter?’ ”

“ ‘Yes.’ ”

Sir Patrick returned to the memorandum.

“ ‘After that, he stopped all night.’ Stopped in the rooms he had taken for himself and his wife?’ ”

“ ‘Yes.’ ”

“ ‘And what happened the next day?’ ”

“ ‘He went away. Wait a bit! Said he had business, for an excuse.’ ”

“ ‘That is to say, he kept up the deception with

the people of the inn? and left the lady behind him, in the character of his wife?"

"That's it."

"Did he go back to the inn?"

"No."

"How long did the lady stay there, after he had gone?"

"She stayed—well, she stayed a few days."

"And your friend has not seen her since?"

"No."

"Are your friend and the lady English or Scotch?"

"Both English."

"At the time when they met at the inn, had they either of them arrived in Scotland, from the place in which they were previously living, within a period of less than twenty-one days?"

Geoffrey hesitated. There could be no difficulty in answering for Anne. Lady Lundie and her domestic circle had occupied Windygates for a much longer period than three weeks before the date of the lawn-party. The question, as it affected Arnold, was the only question that required reflection. After searching his memory for details of the conversation which had taken place between them, when he and Arnold had met at the lawn-party, Geoffrey recalled a certain reference on the part of his friend to a performance at the Edinburgh theater, which at once decided the question of time. Arnold had been necessarily detained in Edinburgh, before his arrival at Windygates, by legal business connected with his inheritance; and he, like Anne,

had certainly been in Scotland, before they met at Craig Fernie, for a longer period than a period of three weeks. He accordingly informed Sir Patrick that the lady and gentleman had been in Scotland for more than twenty-one days—and then added a question on his own behalf: “Don’t let me hurry you, sir—but, shall you soon have done?”

“I shall have done, after two more questions,” answered Sir Patrick. “Am I to understand that the lady claims, on the strength of the circumstances which you have mentioned to me, to be your friend’s wife?”

Geoffrey made an affirmative reply. The readiest means of obtaining Sir Patrick’s opinion was, in this case, to answer yes. In other words, to represent Anne (in the character of “the lady”) as claiming to be married to Arnold (in the character of “his friend”).

Having made this concession to circumstances, he was, at the same time, quite cunning enough to see that it was of vital importance to the purpose which he had in view to confine himself strictly to this one perversion of the truth. There could be plainly no depending on the lawyer’s opinion, unless that opinion was given on the facts exactly as they had occurred at the inn. To the facts he had, thus far, carefully adhered; and to the facts (with the one inevitable departure from them which had been just forced on him) he determined to adhere to the end.

“Did no letters pass between the lady and gentleman?” pursued Sir Patrick.



"None that I know of," answered Geoffrey, steadily returning to the truth.

"I have done, Mr. Delamayn."

"Well; and what's your opinion?"

"Before I give my opinion I am bound to preface it by a personal statement which you are not to take, if you please, as a statement of the law. You ask me to decide—on the facts with which you have supplied me—whether your friend is, according to the law of Scotland, married or not?"

Geoffrey nodded. "That's it!" he said, eagerly.

"My experience, Mr. Delamayn, is that any single man, in Scotland, may marry any single woman, at any time, and under any circumstances. In short, after thirty years' practice as a lawyer, I don't know what is *not* a marriage in Scotland."

"In plain English," said Geoffrey, "you mean she's his wife?"

In spite of his cunning, in spite of his self-command, his eyes brightened as he said those words. And the tone in which he spoke—though too carefully guarded to be a tone of triumph—was, to a fine ear, unmistakably a tone of relief.

Neither the look nor the tone was lost on Sir Patrick.

His first suspicion, when he sat down to the conference, had been the obvious suspicion that, in speaking of "his friend," Geoffrey was speaking of himself. But, like all lawyers, he

habitually distrusted first impressions, his own included. His object, thus far, had been to solve the problem of Geoffrey's true position and Geoffrey's real motive. He had set the snare accordingly, and had caught his bird.

It was now plain to his mind—first, that this man who was consulting him, was, in all probability, really speaking of the case of another person: secondly, that he had an interest (of what nature it was impossible yet to say) in satisfying his own mind that “his friend” was, by the law of Scotland, indisputably a married man. Having penetrated to that extent the secret which Geoffrey was concealing from him, he abandoned the hope of making any further advance at that present sitting. The next question to clear up in the investigation was the question of who the anonymous “lady” might be. And the next discovery to make was, whether “the lady” could, or could not, be identified with Anne Silvester. Pending the inevitable delay in reaching that result, the straight course was (in Sir Patrick's present state of uncertainty) the only course to follow in laying down the law. He at once took the question of the marriage in hand—with no concealment whatever, as to the legal bearings of it, from the client who was consulting him.

“Don't rush to conclusions, Mr. Delamayn,” he said. “I have only told you what my general experience is thus far. My professional opinion on the special case of your friend has not been given yet.”

Geoffrey's face clouded again. Sir Patrick carefully noted the new change in it.

"The law of Scotland," he went on, "so far as it relates to Irregular Marriages, is an outrage on common decency and common sense. If you think my language in thus describing it too strong—I can refer you to the language of a judicial authority. Lord Deas delivered a recent judgment of marriage in Scotland, from the bench, in these words: 'Consent makes marriage. No form or ceremony, civil or religious; no notice before, or publication after; no cohabitation, no writing, no witnesses even, are essential to the constitution of this, the most important contract which two persons can enter into.'—There is a Scotch judge's own statement of the law that he administers! Observe, at the same time, if you please, that we make full legal provision in Scotland for contracts affecting the sale of houses and lands, horses and dogs. The only contract which we leave without safeguards or precautions of any sort is the contract that unites a man and a woman for life. As for the authority of parents, and the innocence of children, our law recognizes no claim on it either in the one case or in the other. A girl of twelve and a boy of fourteen have nothing to do but to cross the Border, and to be married—without the interposition of the slightest delay or restraint, and without the slightest attempt to inform their parents on the part of the Scotch law. As to the marriages of men and women, even the mere interchange of consent which, as you

have just heard, makes them man and wife, is not required to be directly proved: it may be proved by inference. And, more even than that, whatever the law for its consistency may presume, men and women are, in point of fact, held to be married in Scotland where consent has never been interchanged, and where the parties do not even know that they are legally held to be married persons. Are you sufficiently confused about the law of Irregular Marriages in Scotland by this time, Mr. Delamayn? And have I said enough to justify the strong language I used when I undertook to describe it to you?"

"Who's that 'authority' you talked of just now?" inquired Geoffrey. "Couldn't I ask *him*?"

"You might find him flatly contradicted, if you did ask him, by another authority equally learned and equally eminent," answered Sir Patrick. "I am not joking—I am only stating facts. Have you heard of the Queen's Commission?"

"No."

"Then listen to this. In March, 'sixty-five, the Queen appointed a Commission to inquire into the Marriage-Laws of the United Kingdom. The report of that Commission is published in London; and is accessible to anybody who chooses to pay the price of two or three shillings for it. One of the results of the inquiry was, the discovery that high authorities were of entirely contrary opinions on one of the

vital questions of Scottish marriage-law. And the Commissioners, in announcing that fact, add that the question of which opinion is right is still disputed, and has never been made the subject of legal decision. Authorities are everywhere at variance throughout the Report. A haze of doubt and uncertainty hangs in Scotland over the most important contract of civilized life. If no other reason existed for reforming the Scotch marriage-law, there would be reason enough afforded by that one fact. An uncertain marriage-law is a national calamity."

"You can tell me what you think yourself about my friend's case—can't you?" said Geoffrey, still holding obstinately to the end that he had in view.

"Certainly. Now that I have given you due warning of the danger of implicitly relying on any individual opinion, I may give *my* opinion with a clear conscience. I say that there has *not* been a positive marriage in this case. There has been evidence in favor of possibly establishing a marriage—nothing more."

The distinction here was far too fine to be appreciated by Geoffrey's mind. He frowned heavily, in bewilderment and disgust.

"Not married!" he exclaimed, "when they said they were man and wife, before witnesses?"

"That is a common popular error," said Sir Patrick. "As I have already told you, witnesses are not legally necessary to make a mar-

riage in Scotland. They are only valuable—as in this case—to help, at some future time, in proving a marriage that is in dispute.”

Geoffrey caught at the last words.

“The landlady and the waiter *might* make it out to be a marriage, then?” he said.

“Yes. And, remember, if you choose to apply to one of my professional colleagues, he might possibly tell you they were married already. A state of the law which allows the interchange of matrimonial consent to be proved by inference leaves a wide door open to conjecture. Your friend refers to a certain lady, in so many words, as his wife. The lady refers to your friend, in so many words, as her husband. In the rooms which they have taken, as man and wife, they remain, as man and wife, till the next morning. Your friend goes away, without undeceiving anybody. The lady stays at the inn, for some days after, in the character of his wife. And all these circumstances take place in the presence of competent witnesses. Logically—if not legally—there is apparently an inference of the interchange of matrimonial consent here. I stick to my own opinion, nevertheless. Evidence in proof of a marriage (I say)—nothing more.”

While Sir Patrick had been speaking, Geoffrey had been considering with himself. By dint of hard thinking he had found his way to a decisive question on his side.

“Look here!” he said, dropping his heavy hand down on the table. “I want to bring you

to book, sir! Suppose my friend had another lady in his eye?"

"Yes?"

"As things are now—would you advise him to marry her?"

"As things are now—certainly not!"

Geoffrey got briskly on his legs, and closed the interview.

"That will do," he said, "for him and for me."

With those words he walked back, without ceremony, into the main thoroughfare of the room.

"I don't know who your friend is," thought Sir Patrick, looking after him. "But if your interest in the question of his marriage is an honest and a harmless interest, I know no more of human nature than the babe unborn!"

Immediately on leaving Sir Patrick, Geoffrey was encountered by one of the servants in search of him.

"I beg your pardon, sir," began the man. "The groom from the Honorable Mr. Delamayn's—"

"Yes? The fellow who brought me a note from my brother this morning?"

"He's expected back, sir—he's afraid he mustn't wait any longer."

"Come here, and I'll give you the answer for him."

He led the way to the writing-table, and referred to Julius's letter again. He ran his eye carelessly over it, until he reached the final lines: "Come to-morrow, and help us to receive



Mrs. Glenarm." For a while he paused, with his eye fixed on that sentence; and with the happiness of three people—of Anne, who had loved him; of Arnold, who had served him; of Blanche, guiltless of injuring him—resting on the decision that guided his movements for the next day. After what had passed that morning between Arnold and Blanche, if he remained at Lady Lundie's he had no alternative but to perform his promise to Anne. If he returned to his brother's house, he had no alternative but to desert Anne, on the infamous pretext that she was Arnold's wife.

He suddenly tossed the letter away from him on the table and snatched a sheet of note-paper out of the writing-case. "Here goes for Mrs. Glenarm!" he said to himself; and wrote back to his brother, in one line: "Dear Julius, expect me to-morrow. G. D." The impassible manservant stood by while he wrote, looking at his magnificent breadth of chest and thinking what a glorious "staying-power" was there for the last terrible mile of the coming race.

"There you are!" he said, and handed his note to the man.

"All right, Geoffrey?" asked a friendly voice behind him.

He turned—and saw Arnold, anxious for news of the consultation with Sir Patrick.

"Yes," he said. "All right."

NOTE.—There are certain readers who feel a disposition to doubt Facts, when they meet with

them in a work of fiction. Persons of this way of thinking may be profitably referred to the book which first suggested to me the idea of writing the present Novel. The book is the Report of the Royal Commissioners on the Laws of Marriage. Published by the Queen's Printers. For her Majesty's Stationery Office. (London, 1868.) What Sir Patrick says professionally of Scotch Marriages in this chapter is taken from this high authority. What the lawyer (in the Prologue) says professionally of Irish Marriages is also derived from the same source. It is needless to encumber these pages with quotations. But as a means of satisfying my readers that they may depend on me, I subjoin an extract from my list of references to the Report of the Marriage Commission, which any persons who may be so inclined can verify for themselves.

*Irish Marriages* (in the Prologue).—See Report, pages XII., XIII., XXIV.

*Irregular Marriages in Scotland*. Statement of the law by Lord Deas. Report, page XVI.—Marriages of children of tender years. Examination of Mr. Muirhead by Lord Chelmsford (Question 689).—Interchange of consent, established by inference. Examination of Mr. Muirhead by the Lord Justice Clerk (Question 654).—Marriage where consent has never been interchanged. Observations of Lord Deas. Report, page XIX.—Contradiction of opinions between authorities. Report, pages XIX., XX.—Legal provision for the sale of horses and dogs. No legal provision for the marriage of men and women. Mr. Seeton's Remarks. Report, page XXX.—Conclusion of the Commissioners. In spite of the arguments advanced before them in favor of not interfering with Irregular Marriages in Scotland, the Commissioners declare their opinion that "Such marriages ought not to continue." (Report, page XXXIV.)

In reference to the arguments (alluded to above) in favor of allowing the present disgraceful state of things to continue, I find them resting mainly on these grounds: That Scotland doesn't like being interfered with by England (!). That Irregular Marriages cost nothing (!!). That they are diminishing in number, and may therefore be trusted, in course of time, to exhaust themselves (!!!). That they act, on certain occasions, in the capacity of a moral trap to catch a profligate man (!!!!). Such is the elevated point of view from which the Institution of Marriage is regarded by some of the most pious and learned men in Scotland. A legal enactment providing for the sale of your wife, when you have done with her, or of your husband, when you "really can't put up with him any longer," appears to be all that is wanting to render this North British estimate of the "Estate of Matrimony" practically complete. It is only fair to add that, of the witnesses giving evidence—oral and written—before the Commissioners, fully one-half regard the Irregular Marriages of Scotland from the Christian and the civilized point of view, and entirely agree with the authoritative conclusion already cited—that such marriages ought to be abolished. W. C.

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIRST.

### DONE!

ARNOLD was a little surprised by the curt manner in which Geoffrey answered him.

"Has Sir Patrick said anything unpleasant?" he asked.

"Sir Patrick has said just what I wanted him to say."

"No difficulty about the marriage?"

"None."

"No fear of Blanche—"

"She won't ask you to go to Craig Fernie—I'll answer for that!" He said the words with a strong emphasis on them, took his brother's letter from the table, snatched up his hat, and went out.

His friends, idling on the lawn, hailed him. He passed by them quickly without answering, without so much as a glance at them over his shoulder. Arriving at the rose-garden, he stopped and took out his pipe; then suddenly changed his mind and turned back again by another path. There was no certainty, at that hour of the day, of his being left alone in the rose-garden. He had a fierce and hungry longing to be by himself; he felt as if he could have been the death of anybody who came and spoke to him at that moment. With his head down and his brows knit heavily, he followed the path to see what it ended in. It ended in a wicket-gate which led into a kitchen-garden. Here he was well out of the way of interruption: there was nothing to attract visitors in the kitchen-garden. He went on to a walnut-tree planted in the middle of the inclosure, with a wooden bench and a broad strip of turf running round it. After first looking about him, he seated himself and lighted his pipe.

"I wish it was done!" he said.

He sat, with his elbows on his knees, smoking and thinking. Before long the restlessness that had got possession of him forced him to his feet again. He rose, and paced round and round the strip of greensward under the walnut-tree, like a wild beast in a cage.

What was the meaning of this disturbance in the inner man? Now that he had committed himself to the betrayal of the friend who had trusted and served him, was he torn by remorse?

He was no more torn by remorse than you are while your eye is passing over this sentence. He was simply in a raging fever of impatience to see himself safely landed at the end which he had in view.

Why should he feel remorse? All remorse springs, more or less directly, from the action of two sentiments, which are neither of them inbred in the natural man. The first of these sentiments is the product of the respect which we learn to feel for ourselves. The second is the product of the respect which we learn to feel for others. In their highest manifestations, these two feelings exalt themselves, until the first becomes the love of God, and the second the love of Man. I have injured you, and I repent of it when it is done. Why should I repent of it if I have gained something by it for my own self, and if you can't make me feel it by injuring Me? I repent of it, because there has been a sense put into me which tells me that I have sinned against Myself, and sinned against You. No such sense as that exists among the instincts

of the natural man. And no such feelings as these troubled Geoffrey Delamayn; for Geoffrey Delamayn was the natural man.

When the idea of his scheme had sprung to life in his mind, the novelty of it had startled him—the enormous daring of it, suddenly self-revealed, had daunted him. The signs of emotion which he had betrayed at the writing-table in the library were the signs of mere mental perturbation, and of nothing more.

That first vivid impression past, the idea had made itself familiar to him. He had become composed enough to see such difficulties as it involved, and such consequences as it implied. These had fretted him with a passing trouble; for these he plainly discerned. As for the cruelty and the treachery of the thing he meditated doing—that consideration never crossed the limits of his mental view. His position toward the man whose life he had preserved was the position of a dog. The “noble animal” who has saved you or me from drowning will fly at your throat or mine, under certain conditions, ten minutes afterward. Add to the dog’s unreasoning instinct the calculating cunning of a man; suppose yourself to be in a position to say of some trifling thing, “Curious! at such and such a time I happened to pick up such and such an object; and now it turns out to be of some use to me!”—and there you have an index to the state of Geoffrey’s feeling toward his friend when he recalled the past or when he contemplated the future. When Arnold had spoken to



him at the critical moment, Arnold had violently irritated him; and that was all.

The same impenetrable insensibility, the same primitively natural condition of the moral being, prevented him from being troubled by the slightest sense of pity for Anne. "She's out of my way!" was his first thought. "She's provided for, without any trouble to Me!" was his second. He was not in the least uneasy about her. Not the slightest doubt crossed his mind that, when once she had realized her own situation, when once she saw herself placed between the two alternatives of facing her own ruin or of claiming Arnold as a last resource, she would claim Arnold. She would do it as a matter of course; because *he* would have done it in her place.

But he wanted it over. He was wild, as he paced round and round the walnut-tree, to hurry on the crisis and be done with it. Give me my freedom to go to the other woman, and to train for the foot-race—that's what I want. *They* injured? Confusion to them both! It's I who am injured by them. They are the worst enemies I have! They stand in my way.

How to be rid of them? There was the difficulty. He had made up his mind to be rid of them that day. How was he to begin?

There was no picking a quarrel with Arnold, and so beginning with *him*. This course of proceeding, in Arnold's position toward Blanche, would lead to a scandal at the outset—a scandal which would stand in the way of his making the



right impression on Mrs. Glenarm. The woman—lonely and friendless, with her sex and her position both against her if *she* tried to make a scandal of it—the woman was the one to begin with. Settle it at once and forever with Anne; and leave Arnold to hear of it and deal with it, sooner or later, no matter which.

How was he to break it to her before the day was out?

By going to the inn and openly addressing her to her face as Mrs. Arnold Brinkworth? No! He had had enough, at Windygates, of meeting her face to face. The easy way was to write to her, and send the letter, by the first messenger he could find, to the inn. She might appear afterward at Windygates; she might follow him to his brother's; she might appeal to his father. It didn't matter; he had got the whip-hand of her now. "You are a married woman." There was the one sufficient answer, which was strong enough to back him in denying anything!

He made out the letter in his own mind. "Something like this would do," he thought, as he went round and round the walnut-tree: "You may be surprised not to have seen me. You have only yourself to thank for it. I know what took place between you and him at the inn. I have had a lawyer's advice. You are Arnold Brinkworth's wife. I wish you joy, and good-bye forever." Address those lines: "To Mrs. Arnold Brinkworth;" instruct the messenger to leave the letter late that night, without waiting for an answer; start the first thing the next

morning for his brother's house; and behold, it was done!

But even here there was an obstacle—one last exasperating obstacle—still in the way.

If she was known at the inn by any name at all, it was by the name of Mrs. Silvester. A letter addressed to "Mrs. Arnold Brinkworth" would probably not be taken in at the door; or if it was admitted, and if it was actually offered to her, she might decline to receive it, as a letter not addressed to herself. A man of readier mental resources would have seen that the name on the outside of the letter mattered little or nothing, so long as the contents were read by the person to whom they were addressed. But Geoffrey's was the order of mind which expresses disturbance by attaching importance to trifles. He attached an absurd importance to preserving absolute consistency in his letter, outside and in. If he declared her to be Arnold Brinkworth's wife, he must direct to her as Arnold Brinkworth's wife; or who could tell what the law might say, or what scrape he might not get himself into by a mere scratch of the pen! The more he thought of it, the more persuaded he felt of his own cleverness here, and the hotter and the angrier he grew.

There is a way out of everything. And there was surely a way out of this, if he could only see it.

He failed to see it. After dealing with all the great difficulties, the small difficulty proved too much for him. It struck him that he might

have been thinking too long about it—considering that he was not accustomed to thinking long about anything. Besides, his head was getting giddy with going mechanically round and round the tree. He irritably turned his back on the tree, and struck into another path: resolved to think of something else, and then to return to his difficulty, and see it with a new eye.

Leaving his thoughts free to wander where they liked, his thoughts naturally busied themselves with the next subject that was uppermost in his mind, the subject of the Foot-race. In a week's time his arrangements ought to be made. Now, as to the training, first.

He decided on employing two trainers this time. One to travel to Scotland, and begin with him at his brother's house. The other to take him up, with a fresh eye to him, on his return to London. He turned over in his mind the performances of the formidable rival against whom he was to be matched. That other man was the swiftest runner of the two. The betting in Geoffrey's favor was betting which calculated on the unparalleled length of the race, and on Geoffrey's prodigious powers of endurance. How long he should "wait on" the man? Whereabouts it would be safe to "pick the man up?" How near the end to calculate the man's exhaustion to a nicety and "put on the spurt," and pass him? These were nice points to decide. The deliberations of a pedestrian-privy-council would be required to help him under this heavy responsibility. What men could he trust? He

could trust A and B—both of them authorities: both of them stanch. Query about C? As an authority, unexceptionable; as a man, doubtful. The problem relating to C brought him to a standstill—and declined to be solved, even then. Never mind! he could always take the advice of A and B. In the meantime, devote C to the infernal regions; and, thus dismissing him, try and think of something else. What else? Mrs. Glenarm? Oh, bother the women! one of them is the same as another. They all waddle when they run; and they all fill their stomachs before dinner with sloppy tea. That's the only difference between women and men—the rest is nothing but a weak imitation of Us. Devote the women to the infernal regions; and, so dismissing *them*, try and think of something else. Of what? Of something worth thinking of, this time—of filling another pipe.

He took out his tobacco-pouch, and suddenly suspended operations at the moment of opening it.

What was the object he saw, on the other side of a row of dwarf pear-trees, away to the right? A woman—evidently a servant, by her dress—stooping down with her back to him, gathering something: herbs they looked like, as well as he could make them out at the distance.

What was that thing hanging by a string at the woman's side? A slate? Yes. What the deuce did she want with a slate at her side? He was in search of something to divert his mind, and here it was found. "Anything will do for

me," he thought. "Suppose I 'chaff' her a little about her slate?"

He called to the woman across the pear-trees. "Halloo!"

The woman raised herself, and advanced toward him slowly—looking at him, as she came on, with the sunken eyes, the sorrow-stricken face, the stony tranquillity of Hester Dethridge.

Geoffrey was staggered. He had not bargained for exchanging the dullest producible vulgarities of human speech (called in the language of slang, "Chaff") with such a woman as this.

"What's that slate for?" he asked, not knowing what else to say, to begin with.

The woman lifted her hand to her lips—touched them—and shook her head.

"Dumb?"

The woman bowed her head.

"Who are you?"

The woman wrote on her slate, and handed it to him over the pear-trees. He read: "I am the cook."

"Well, cook, were you born dumb?"

The woman shook her head.

"What struck you dumb?"

The woman wrote on her slate: "A blow."

"Who gave you the blow?"

She shook her head.

"Won't you tell me?"

She shook her head again.

Her eyes had rested on his face while he was questioning her; staring at him, cold, dull and changeless as the eyes of a corpse. Firm as his

nerves were—dense as he was, on all ordinary occasions, to anything in the shape of an imaginative impression—the eyes of the dumb cook slowly penetrated him with a stealthy inner chill. Something crept at the marrow of his back, and shuddered under the roots of his hair. He felt a sudden impulse to get away from her. It was simple enough; he had only to say good-morning, and go on. He did say good-morning—but he never moved. He put his hand into his pocket and offered her some money, as a way of making *her* go. She stretched out her hand across the pear-trees to take it—and stopped abruptly, with her arm suspended in the air. A sinister change passed over the death-like tranquillity of her face. Her closed lips slowly dropped apart. Her dull eyes slowly dilated; looked away, sidewise, from *his* eyes; stopped again; and stared, rigid and glittering, over his shoulder—stared as if they saw a sight of horror behind him. “What the devil are you looking at?” he asked—and turned round quickly, with a start. There was neither person nor thing to be seen behind him. He turned back again to the woman. The woman had left him, under the influence of some sudden panic. She was hurrying away from him—running, old as she was—flying the sight of him, as if the sight of him was the pestilence.

“Mad!” he thought—and turned his back on the sight of her.

He found himself (hardly knowing how he had got there) under the walnut-tree once more. In

a few minutes his hardy nerves had recovered themselves—he could laugh over the remembrance of the strange impression that had been produced on him. “Frightened for the first time in my life,” he thought—“and that by an old woman! It’s time I went into training again, when things have come to this!”

He looked at his watch. It was close on the luncheon hour up at the house; and he had not decided yet what to do about his letter to Anne. He resolved to decide, then and there.

The woman—the dumb woman, with the stony face and the horrid eyes—re-appeared in his thoughts, and got in the way of his decision. Pooh! some crazed old servant, who might once have been cook; who was kept out of charity now. Nothing more important than that. No more of her! no more of her!

He laid himself down on the grass, and gave his mind to the serious question. How to address Anne as “Mrs. Arnold Brinkworth?” and how to make sure of her receiving the letter.

The dumb old woman got in his way again.

He closed his eyes impatiently, and tried to shut her out in a darkness of his own making.

The woman showed herself through the darkness. He saw her, as if he had just asked her a question, writing on her slate. What she wrote he failed to make out. It was all over in an instant. He started up, with a feeling of astonishment at himself—and, at the same moment, his brain cleared with the suddenness of a flash of light. He saw his way, without a conscious



effort on his own part, through the difficulty that had troubled him. Two envelopes, of course: an inner one, unsealed, and addressed to "Mrs. Arnold Brinkworth;" an outer one, sealed, and addressed to "Mrs. Silvester:" and there was the problem solved! Surely the simplest problem that had ever puzzled a stupid head.

Why had he not seen it before? Impossible to say.

How came he to have seen it now?

The dumb old woman re-appeared in his thoughts—as if the answer to the question lay in something connected with *her*.

He became alarmed about himself, for the first time in his life. Had this persistent impression, produced by nothing but a crazy old woman, anything to do with the broken health which the surgeon had talked about? Was his head on the turn? Or had he smoked too much on an empty stomach, and gone too long (after traveling all night) without his customary drink of ale?

He left the garden to put that latter theory to the test forthwith. The betting would have gone dead against him if the public had seen him at that moment. He looked haggard and anxious—and with good reason too. His nervous system had suddenly forced itself on his notice, without the slightest previous introduction, and was saying (in an unknown tongue), Here I am!

Returning to the purely ornamental part of the grounds, Geoffrey encountered one of the footmen giving a message to one of the gardeners.

He at once asked for the butler—as the only safe authority to consult in the present emergency.

Conducted to the butler's pantry, Geoffrey requested that functionary to produce a jug of his oldest ale, with appropriate solid nourishment in the shape of "a hunk of bread and cheese."

The butler stared. As a form of condescension among the upper classes this was quite new to him.

"Luncheon will be ready directly, sir."

"What is there for lunch?"

The butler ran over an appetizing list of good dishes and rare wines.

"The devil take your kickshaws!" said Geoffrey. "Give me my old ale, and my hunk of bread and cheese."

"Where will you take them, sir?"

"Here, to be sure! And the sooner the better."

The butler issued the necessary orders with all needful alacrity. He spread the simple refreshment demanded, before his distinguished guest, in a state of blank bewilderment. Here was a nobleman's son, and a public celebrity into the bargain, filling himself with bread and cheese and ale, in at once the most voracious and the most unpretending manner, at *his* table! The butler ventured on a little complimentary familiarity. He smiled, and touched the betting-book in his breast-pocket. "I've put six pound on you, sir, for the Race." "All right, old boy! you shall win your money!" With those noble words the honorable gentleman

clapped him on the back and held out his tumbler for some more ale. The butler felt trebly an Englishman as he filled the foaming glass. Ah! foreign nations may have their revolutions! foreign aristocracies may tumble down! The British aristocracy lives in the hearts of the people, and lives forever!

“Another!” said Geoffrey, presenting his empty glass. “Here’s luck!” He tossed off his liquor at a draught, and nodded to the butler, and went out.

Had the experiment succeeded? Had he proved his own theory about himself to be right? Not a doubt of it! An empty stomach, and a determination of tobacco to the head—these were the true causes of that strange state of mind into which he had fallen in the kitchen garden. The dumb woman with the stony face vanished as if in a mist. He felt nothing now but a comfortable buzzing in his head, a genial warmth all over him, and an unlimited capacity for carrying any responsibility that could rest on mortal shoulders. Geoffrey was himself again.

He went round toward the library, to write his letter to Anne—and so have done with that, to begin with. The company had collected in the library waiting for the luncheon-bell. All were idly talking; and some would be certain, if he showed himself, to fasten on *him*. He turned back again, without showing himself. The only way of writing in peace and quietness would be to wait until they were all at luncheon, and then return to the library. The same opportunity

would serve also for finding a messenger to take the letter, without exciting attention, and for going away afterward, unseen, on a long walk, by himself. An absence of two or three hours would cast the necessary dust in Arnold's eyes; for it would be certainly interpreted by him as meaning absence at an interview with Anne.

He strolled idly through the grounds, further and further away from the house.

The talk in the library—aimless and empty enough, for the most part—was talk to the purpose, in one corner of the room, in which Sir Patrick and Blanche were sitting together.

"Uncle! I have been watching you for the last minute or two."

"At my age, Blanche, that is paying me a very pretty compliment."

"Do you know what I have seen?"

"You have seen an old gentleman in want of his lunch."

"I have seen an old gentleman with something on his mind. What is it?"

"Suppressed gout, my dear."

"That won't do! I am not to be put off in that way. Uncle! I want to know—"

"Stop there, Blanche! A young lady who says she 'wants to know,' expresses very dangerous sentiments. Eve 'wanted to know'—and see what it led to. Faust 'wanted to know'—and got into bad company, as the necessary result."

"You are feeling anxious about something,"

persisted Blanche. "And, what is more, Sir Patrick, you behaved in a most unaccountable manner a little while since."

"When?"

"When you went and hid yourself with Mr. Delamayn in that snug corner there. I saw you lead the way in, while I was at work on Lady Lundie's odious dinner-invitations."

"Oh! you call that being at work, do you? I wonder whether there was ever a woman yet who could give the whole of her mind to any earthly thing that she had to do?"

"Never mind the women! What subject in common could you and Mr. Delamayn possibly have to talk about? And why do I see a wrinkle between your eyebrows, now you have done with him?—a wrinkle which certainly wasn't there before you had that private conference together?"

Before answering, Sir Patrick considered whether he should take Blanche into his confidence or not. The attempt to identify Geoffrey's unnamed "lady," which he was determined to make, would lead him to Craig Fernie, and would no doubt end in obliging him to address himself to Anne. Blanche's intimate knowledge of her friend might unquestionably be made useful to him under these circumstances; and Blanche's discretion was to be trusted in any matter in which Miss Silvester's interests were concerned. On the other hand, caution was imperatively necessary, in the present imperfect state of his information—and caution, in Sir Patrick's mind, carried the day. He decided to

wait and see what came first of his investigation at the inn.

"Mr. Delamayn consulted me on a dry point of law, in which a friend of his was interested," said Sir Patrick. "You have wasted your curiosity, my dear, on a subject totally unworthy of a lady's notice."

Blanche's penetration was not to be deceived on such easy terms as these. "Why not say at once that you won't tell me?" she rejoined. "*You* shutting yourself up with Mr. Delamayn to talk law! *You* looking absent and anxious about it afterward! I am a very unhappy girl!" said Blanche, with a little bitter sigh. "There is something in me that seems to repel the people I love. Not a word in confidence can I get from Anne. And not a word in confidence can I get from you. And I do so long to sympathize! It's very hard. I think I shall go to Arnold."

Sir Patrick took his niece's hand.

"Stop a minute, Blanche. About Miss Silvester? Have you heard from her to-day?"

"No. I am more unhappy about her than words can say."

"Suppose somebody went to Craig Fernie and tried to find out the cause of Miss Silvester's silence? Would you believe that somebody sympathized with you then?"

Blanche's face flushed brightly with pleasure and surprise. She raised Sir Patrick's hand gratefully to her lips.

"Oh!" she exclaimed. "You don't mean that *you* would do that?"

"I am certainly the last person who ought to do it—seeing that you went to the inn in flat rebellion against my orders, and that I only forgave you, on your own promise of amendment, the other day. It is a miserably weak proceeding on the part of 'the head of the family' to be turning his back on his own principles, because his niece happens to be anxious and unhappy. Still (if you could lend me your little carriage), I *might* take a surly drive toward Craig Fernie, all by myself, and I *might* stumble against Miss Silvester—in case you have anything to say."

"Anything to say?" repeated Blanche. She put her arm round her uncle's neck, and whispered in his ear one of the most interminable messages that ever was sent from one human being to another. Sir Patrick listened, with a growing interest in the inquiry on which he was secretly bent. "The woman must have some noble qualities," he thought, "who can inspire such devotion as this."

While Blanche was whispering to her uncle, a second private conference—of the purely domestic sort—was taking place between Lady Lundie and the butler, in the hall outside the library door.

"I am sorry to say, my lady, Hester Dethridge has broken out again."

"What do you mean?"

"She was all right, my lady, when she went into the kitchen-garden, some time since. She's taken strange again, now she has come back. Wants the rest of the day to herself, your ladyship. Says she's overworked, with all the com-



pany in the house—and, I must say, does look like a person troubled and worn out in body and mind.”

“Don’t talk nonsense, Roberts! The woman is obstinate and idle and insolent. She is now in the house, as you know, under a month’s notice to leave. If she doesn’t choose to do her duty for that month, I shall refuse to give her a character. Who is to cook the dinner to-day if I give Hester Dethridge leave to go out?”

“Any way, my lady, I am afraid the kitchen-maid will have to do her best to-day. Hester is very obstinate, when the fit takes her—as your ladyship says.”

“If Hester Dethridge leaves the kitchen-maid to cook the dinner, Roberts, Hester Dethridge leaves my service to-day. I want no more words about it. If she persists in setting my orders at defiance, let her bring her account-book into the library, while we are at lunch, and lay it on my desk. I shall be back in the library after luncheon—and if I see the account-book I shall know what it means. In that case, you will receive my directions to settle with her and send her away. Ring the luncheon-bell.”

The luncheon-bell rang. The guests all took the direction of the dining-room; Sir Patrick following, from the far end of the library, with Blanche on his arm. Arrived at the dining-room door, Blanche stopped, and asked her uncle to excuse her if she left him to go in by himself.

“I will be back directly,” she said. “I have forgotten something upstairs.”

Sir Patrick went in. The dining-room door closed; and Blanche returned alone to the library. Now on one pretense, and now on another, she had, for three days past, faithfully fulfilled the engagement she had made at Craig Fernie to wait ten minutes after luncheon-time in the library, on the chance of seeing Anne. On this, the fourth occasion, the faithful girl sat down alone in the great room, and waited with her eyes fixed on the lawn outside.

Five minutes passed, and nothing living appeared but the birds hopping about the grass.

In less than a minute more Blanche's quick ear caught the faint sound of a woman's dress brushing over the lawn. She ran to the nearest window, looked out, and clapped her hands with a cry of delight. There was the well-known figure, rapidly approaching her! Anne was true to their friendship—Anne had kept her engagement at last!

Blanche hurried out, and drew her into the library in triumph. "This makes amends, love, for everything! You answer my letter in the best of all ways—you bring me your own dear self."

She placed Anne in a chair, and, lifting her veil, saw her plainly in the brilliant midday light.

The change in the whole woman was nothing less than dreadful to the loving eyes that rested on her. She looked years older than her real age. There was a dull calm in her face, a stagnant, stupefied submission to anything, pitiable to see. Three days and nights of solitude and

grief, three days and nights of unresting and unpartaken suspense, had crushed that sensitive nature, had frozen that warm heart. The animating spirit was gone—the mere shell of the woman lived and moved, a mockery of her former self.

“Oh, Anne! Anne! What *can* have happened to you? Are you frightened? There’s not the least fear of anybody disturbing us. They are all at luncheon, and the servants are at dinner. We have the room entirely to ourselves. My darling! you look so faint and strange! Let me get you something.”

Anne drew Blanche’s head down and kissed her. It was done in a dull, slow way—without a word, without a tear, without a sigh.

“You’re tired—I’m sure you’re tired. Have you walked here? You shan’t go back on foot; I’ll take care of that!”

Anne roused herself at those words. She spoke for the first time. The tone was lower than was natural to her; sadder than was natural to her—but the charm of her voice, the native gentleness and beauty of it, seemed to have survived the wreck of all besides.

“I don’t go back, Blanche. I have left the inn.”

“Left the inn? With your husband?”

She answered the first question—not the second.

“I can’t go back,” she said. “The inn is no place for me. A curse seems to follow me, Blanche, wherever I go. I am the cause of

quarreling and wretchedness, without meaning it, God knows. The old man who is head-waiter at the inn has been kind to me, my dear, in his way, and he and the landlady had hard words together about it. A quarrel, a shocking, violent quarrel. He has lost his place in consequence. The woman, his mistress, lays all the blame of it to my door. She is a hard woman; and she has been harder than ever since Bishop-riggs went away. I have missed a letter at the inn—I must have thrown it aside, I suppose, and forgotten it. I only know that I remembered about it, and couldn't find it last night. I told the landlady, and she fastened a quarrel on me almost before the words were out of my mouth. Asked me if I charged her with stealing my letter. Said things to me—I can't repeat them. I am not very well, and not able to deal with people of that sort. I thought it best to leave Craig Fernie this morning. I hope and pray I shall never see Craig Fernie again."

She told her little story with a total absence of emotion of any sort, and laid her head back wearily on the chair when it was done.

Blanche's eyes filled with tears at the sight of her.

"I won't tease you with questions, Anne," she said, gently. "Come upstairs and rest in my room. You're not fit to travel, love. I'll take care that nobody comes near us."

The stable-clock at Windygates struck the quarter to two. Anne raised herself in the chair with a start.

"What time was that?" she asked.

Blanche told her.

"I can't stay," she said. "I have come here to find something out, if I can. You won't ask me questions? Don't, Blanche, don't! for the sake of old times."

Blanche turned aside, heart-sick. "I will do nothing, dear, to annoy you," she said, and took Anne's hand, and hid the tears that were beginning to fall over her cheeks.

"I want to know something, Blanche. Will you tell me?"

"Yes. What is it?"

"Who are the gentlemen staying in the house?"

Blanche looked round at her again, in sudden astonishment and alarm. A vague fear seized her that Anne's mind had given way under the heavy weight of trouble laid on it. Anne persisted in pressing her strange request.

"Run over their names, Blanche. I have a reason for wishing to know who the gentlemen are who are staying in the house."

Blanche repeated the names of Lady Lundie's guests, leaving to the last the guests who had arrived last.

"Two more came back this morning," she went on. "Arnold Brinkworth and that hateful friend of his, Mr. Delamayn."

Anne's head sank back once more on the chair. She had found her way, without exciting suspicion of the truth, to the one discovery which she had come to Windygates to make. He was

in Scotland again, and he had only arrived from London that morning. There was barely time for him to have communicated with Craig Fernie before she left the inn—he, too, who hated letter-writing! The circumstances were all in his favor: there was no reason, there was really and truly no reason, so far, to believe that he had deserted her. The heart of the unhappy woman bounded in her bosom, under the first ray of hope that had warmed it for four days past. Under that sudden revulsion of feeling, her weakened frame shook from head to foot. Her face flushed deep for a moment—then turned deadly pale again. Blanche, anxiously watching her, saw the serious necessity for giving some restorative to her instantly.

“I am going to get you some wine—you will faint, Anne, if you don’t take something. I shall be back in a moment; and I can manage it without anybody being the wiser.”

She pushed Anne’s chair close to the nearest open window—a window at the upper end of the library—and ran out.

Blanche had barely left the room, by the door that led into the hall, when Geoffrey entered it by one of the lower windows opening from the lawn.

With his mind absorbed in the letter that he was about to write, he slowly advanced up the room toward the nearest table. Anne, hearing the sound of footsteps, started, and looked round. Her failing strength rallied in an instant, under the sudden relief of seeing him again. She rose

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and advanced eagerly, with a faint tinge of color in her cheeks. He looked up. The two stood face to face together—alone.

“Geoffrey!”

He looked at her without answering—without advancing a step, on his side. There was an evil light in his eyes; his silence was the brute silence that threatens dumbly. He had made up his mind never to see her again, and she had entrapped him into an interview. He had made up his mind to write, and there she stood forcing him to speak. The sum of her offenses against him was now complete. If there had ever been the faintest hope of her raising even a passing pity in his heart, that hope would have been annihilated now.

She failed to understand the full meaning of his silence. She made her excuses, poor soul, for venturing back to Windygates—her excuses to the man whose purpose at that moment was to throw her helpless on the world.

“Pray forgive me for coming here,” she said. “I have done nothing to compromise you, Geoffrey. Nobody but Blanche knows I am at Windygates. And I have contrived to make my inquiries about you without allowing her to suspect our secret.” She stopped and began to tremble. She saw something more in his face than she had read in it at first. “I got your letter,” she went on, rallying her sinking courage. “I don’t complain of its being so short: you don’t like letter-writing, I know. But you promised I should hear from you again. And I



have never heard. And oh, Geoffrey, it was so lonely at the inn!"

She stopped again, and supported herself by resting her hand on the table. The faintness was stealing back on her. She tried to go on again. It was useless—she could only look at him now.

"What do you want?" he asked, in the tone of a man who was putting an unimportant question to a total stranger.

A last gleam of her old energy flickered up in her face, like a dying flame.

"I am broken by what I have gone through," she said. "Don't insult me by making me remind you of your promise."

"What promise?"

"For shame, Geoffrey! for shame! Your promise to marry me."

"You claim my promise after what you have done at the inn?"

She steadied herself against the table with one hand, and put the other hand to her head. Her brain was giddy. The effort to think was too much for her. She said to herself, vacantly, "The inn? What did I do at the inn?"

"I have had a lawyer's advice, mind! I know what I am talking about."

She appeared not to have heard him. She repeated the words, "What did I do at the inn?" and gave it up in despair. Holding by the table, she came close to him and laid her hand on his arm.

"Do you refuse to marry me?" she asked.

He saw the vile opportunity, and said the vile words.

"You're married already to Arnold Brinkworth."

Without a cry to warn him, without an effort to save herself, she dropped senseless at his feet; as her mother had dropped at his father's feet in the bygone time.

He disentangled himself from the folds of her dress. "Done!" he said, looking down at her as she lay on the floor.

As the word fell from his lips he was startled by a sound in the inner part of the house. One of the library doors had not been completely closed. Light footsteps were audible, advancing rapidly across the hall.

He turned and fled, leaving the library, as he had entered it, by the open window at the lower end of the room.

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SECOND.

### GONE.

BLANCHE came in, with a glass of wine in her hand, and saw the swooning woman on the floor.

She was alarmed, but not surprised, as she knelt by Anne and raised her head. Her own previous observation of her friend necessarily prevented her from being at any loss to account for the fainting fit. The inevitable delay in getting the wine was—naturally to her mind—alone



HE TURNED AND FLED BY THE OPEN WINDOW.

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 386.



to blame for the result which now met her view.

If she had been less ready in thus tracing the effect to the cause, she might have gone to the window to see if anything had happened, out of doors, to frighten Anne—might have seen Geoffrey before he had time to turn the corner of the house—and, making that one discovery, might have altered the whole course of events, not in her coming life only, but in the coming lives of others. So do we shape our own destinies, blindfold. So do we hold our poor little tenure of happiness at the capricious mercy of Chance. It is surely a blessed delusion which persuades us that we are the highest product of the great scheme of creation, and sets us doubting whether other planets are inhabited, because other planets are not surrounded by an atmosphere which *we* can breathe!

After trying such simple remedies as were within her reach, and trying them without success, Blanche became seriously alarmed. Anne lay, to all outward appearance, dead in her arms. She was on the point of calling for help—come what might of the discovery which would ensue—when the door from the hall opened once more, and Hester Dethridge entered the room.

The cook had accepted the alternative which her mistress's message had placed before her, if she insisted on having her own time at her own sole disposal for the rest of that day. Exactly as Lady Lundie had desired, she intimated her resolution to carry her point by placing her ac-

count-book on the desk in the library. It was only when this had been done that Blanche received any answer to her entreaties for help. Slowly and deliberately Hester Dethridge walked up to the spot where the young girl knelt with Anne's head on her bosom, and looked at the two without a trace of human emotion in her stern and stony face.

"Don't you see what's happened?" cried Blanche. "Are you alive or dead? Oh, Hester, I can't bring her to! Look at her! look at her!"

Hester Dethridge looked at her, and shook her head. Looked again, thought for a while, and wrote on her slate. Held out the slate over Anne's body, and showed what she had written:

"Who has done it?"

"You stupid creature!" said Blanche. "Nobody has done it."

The eyes of Hester Dethridge steadily read the worn white face, telling its own tale of sorrow mutely on Blanche's breast. The mind of Hester Dethridge steadily looked back at her own knowledge of her own miserable married life. She again returned to writing on her slate—again showed the written words to Blanche.

"Brought to it by a man. Let her be—and God will take her."

"You horrid unfeeling woman! how dare you write such an abominable thing!" With this natural outburst of indignation, Blanche looked back at Anne; and, daunted by the death-like persistency of the swoon, appealed again to

the mercy of the immovable woman who was looking down at her. "Oh, Hester! for Heaven's sake help me!"

The cook dropped her slate at her side, and bent her head gravely in sign that she submitted. She motioned to Blanche to loosen Anne's dress, and then—kneeling on one knee—took Anne to support her while it was being done.

The instant Hester Dethridge touched her, the swooning woman gave signs of life.

A faint shudder ran through her from head to foot—her eyelids trembled—half opened for a moment—and closed again. As they closed, a low sigh fluttered feebly from her lips.

Hester Dethridge put her back in Blanche's arms—considered a little with herself—returned to writing on her slate—and held out the written words once more:

"Shivered when I touched her. That means I have been walking over her grave."

Blanche turned from the sight of the slate, and from the sight of the woman, in horror. "You frighten me!" she said. "You will frighten *her*, if she sees you. I don't mean to offend you; but—leave us, please leave us."

Hester Dethridge accepted her dismissal, as she accepted everything else. She bowed her head in sign that she understood—looked for the last time at Anne—dropped a stiff courtesy to her young mistress—and left the room.

An hour later the butler had paid her, and she had left the house.

Blanche breathed more freely when she found



herself alone. She could feel the relief now of seeing Anne revive.

"Can you hear me, darling?" she whispered. "Can you let me leave you for a moment?"

Anne's eyes slowly opened and looked round her—in that torment and terror of reviving life which marks the awful protest of humanity against its recall to existence when mortal mercy has dared to wake it in the arms of Death.

Blanche rested Anne's head against the nearest chair, and ran to the table upon which she had placed the wine on entering the room.

After swallowing the first few drops Anne began to feel the effect of the stimulant. Blanche persisted in making her empty the glass, and refrained from asking or answering questions until her recovery under the influence of the wine was complete.

"You have over-exerted yourself this morning," she said, as soon as it seemed safe to speak. "Nobody has seen you, darling—nothing has happened. Do you feel like yourself again?"

Anne made an attempt to rise and leave the library; Blanche placed her gently in the chair, and went on:

"There is not the least need to stir. We have another quarter of an hour to ourselves before anybody is at all likely to disturb us. I have something to say, Anne—a little proposal to make. Will you listen to me?"

Anne took Blanche's hand, and pressed it gratefully to her lips. She made no other reply. Blanche proceeded:

"I won't ask any questions, my dear—I won't attempt to keep you here against your will—I won't even remind you of my letter yesterday. But I can't let you go, Anne, without having my mind made easy about you in some way. You will relieve all my anxiety, if you will do one thing—one easy thing, for my sake."

"What is it, Blanche?"

She put that question with her mind far away from the subject before her. Blanche was too eager in pursuit of her object to notice the absent tone, the purely mechanical manner, in which Anne had spoken to her.

"I want you to consult my uncle," she answered. "Sir Patrick is interested in you; Sir Patrick proposed to me this very day to go and see you at the inn. He is the wisest, the kindest, the dearest old man living—and you can trust him as you could trust nobody else. Will you take my uncle into your confidence, and be guided by his advice?"

With her mind still far away from the subject, Anne looked out absently at the lawn, and made no answer.

"Come!" said Blanche. "One word isn't much to say. Is it Yes or No?"

Still looking out on the lawn—still thinking of something else—Anne yielded, and said "Yes."

Blanche was enchanted. "How well I must have managed it!" she thought. "This is what my uncle means, when my uncle talks of 'putting it strongly.'"

She bent down over Anne, and gayly patted her on the shoulder.

"That's the wisest 'Yes,' darling, you ever said in your life. Wait here—and I'll go in to luncheon, or they will be sending to know what has become of me. Sir Patrick has kept my place for me, next to himself. I shall contrive to tell him what I want; and *he* will contrive (oh, the blessing of having to do with a clever man; there are so few of them!)—he will contrive to leave the table before the rest, without exciting anybody's suspicions. Go away with him at once to the summer-house (we have been at the summer-house all the morning; nobody will go back to it now), and I will follow you as soon as I have satisfied Lady Lundie by eating some lunch. Nobody will be any the wiser but our three selves. In five minutes or less you may expect Sir Patrick. Let me go! We haven't a moment to lose!"

Anne held her back. Anne's attention was concentrated on her now.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Are you going on happily with Arnold, Blanche?"

"Arnold is nicer than ever, my dear."

"Is the day fixed for your marriage?"

"The day will be ages hence. Not till we are back in town, at the end of the autumn. Let me go, Anne!"

"Give me a kiss, Blanche."

Blanche kissed her, and tried to release her hand.

Anne held it as if she was drowning, as if her life depended on not letting it go.

“Will you always love me, Blanche, as you love me now?”

“How can you ask me?”

“I said Yes just now. *You* say Yes too.”

Blanche said it. Anne’s eyes fastened on her face, with one long, yearning look, and then Anne’s hand suddenly dropped hers.

She ran out of the room, more agitated, more uneasy than she liked to confess to herself. Never had she felt so certain of the urgent necessity of appealing to Sir Patrick’s advice as she felt at that moment.

The guests were still safe at the luncheon-table when Blanche entered the dining-room.

Lady Lundie expressed the necessary surprise, in the properly graduated tone of reproof, at her step-daughter’s want of punctuality. Blanche made her apologies with the most exemplary humility. She glided into her chair by her uncle’s side, and took the first thing that was offered to her. Sir Patrick looked at his niece, and found himself in the company of a model young English Miss—and marveled inwardly what it might mean.

The talk, interrupted for the moment (topics, Politics and Sport—and then, when a change was wanted, Sport and Politics), was resumed again all round the table. Under cover of the conversation, and in the intervals of receiving the attentions of the gentlemen, Blanche whis-

pered to Sir Patrick, "Don't start, uncle. Anne is in the library." (Polite Mr. Smith offered some ham. Gratefully declined.) "Pray, pray, pray go to her: she is waiting to see you—she is in dreadful trouble." (Gallant Mr. Jones proposed fruit tart and cream. Accepted with thanks.) "Take her to the summer-house: I'll follow you when I get the chance. And manage it at once, uncle, if you love me, or you will be too late."

Before Sir Patrick could whisper back a word in reply, Lady Lundie, cutting a cake of the richest Scottish composition, at the other end of the table, publicly proclaimed it to be her "own cake," and, as such, offered her brother-in-law a slice. The slice exhibited an eruption of plums and sweetmeats, overlaid by a perspiration of butter. It has been said that Sir Patrick had reached the age of seventy—it is, therefore, needless to add that he politely declined to commit an unprovoked outrage on his own stomach.

"My cake!" persisted Lady Lundie, elevating the horrible composition on a fork. "Won't that tempt you?"

Sir Patrick saw his way to slipping out of the room under cover of a compliment to his sister-in-law. He summoned his courtly smile, and laid his hand on his heart.

"A fallible mortal," he said, "is met by a temptation which he cannot possibly resist. If he is a wise mortal, also, what does he do?"

"He eats some of My cake," said the prosaic Lady Lundie.

“No!” said Sir Patrick, with a look of unutterable devotion directed at his sister-in-law. “He flies temptation, dear lady—as I do now.” He bowed, and escaped, unsuspected, from the room.

Lady Lundie cast down her eyes, with an expression of virtuous indulgence for human frailty, and divided Sir Patrick’s compliment modestly between herself and her cake.

Well aware that his own departure from the table would be followed in a few minutes by the rising of the lady of the house, Sir Patrick hurried to the library as fast as his lame foot would let him. Now that he was alone, his manner became anxious and his face looked grave. He entered the room.

Not a sign of Anne Silvester was to be seen anywhere. The library was a perfect solitude.

“Gone!” said Sir Patrick. “This looks bad.”

After a moment’s reflection he went back into the hall to get his hat. It was possible that she might have been afraid of discovery if she stayed in the library, and that she might have gone on to the summer-house by herself.

If she was not to be found in the summer-house, the quieting of Blanche’s mind and the clearing up of her uncle’s suspicions alike depended on discovering the place in which Miss Silvester had taken refuge. In this case time would be of importance, and the capacity of making the most of it would be a precious capacity at starting. Arriving rapidly at these

conclusions, Sir Patrick rang the bell in the hall which communicated with the servants' offices, and summoned his own valet—a person of tried discretion and fidelity, nearly as old as himself.

“Get your hat, Duncan,” he said, when the valet appeared, “and come out with me.”

Master and servant set forth together silently, on their way through the grounds. Arrived within sight of the summer-house, Sir Patrick ordered Duncan to wait, and went on by himself.

There was not the least need for the precaution that he had taken. The summer-house was as empty as the library. He stepped out again and looked about him. Not a living creature was visible. Sir Patrick summoned his servant to join him.

“Go back to the stables, Duncan,” he said, “and say that Miss Lundie lends me her pony-carriage to-day. Let it be got ready at once and kept in the stable-yard. I want to attract as little notice as possible. You are to go with me, and nobody else. Provide yourself with a railway time-table. Have you got any money?”

“Yes, Sir Patrick.”

“Did you happen to see the governess (Miss Silvester) on the day when we came here—the day of the lawn-party?”

“I did, Sir Patrick.”

“Should you know her again?”

“I thought her a very distinguished-looking person, Sir Patrick. I should certainly know her again.”



"Have you any reason to think she noticed you?"

"She never even looked at me, Sir Patrick."

"Very good. Put a change of linen into your bag, Duncan—I may possibly want you to take a journey by railway. Wait for me in the stable-yard. This is a matter in which everything is trusted to my discretion and to yours."

"Thank you, Sir Patrick."

With that acknowledgment of the compliment which had been just paid to him, Duncan gravely went his way to the stables; and Duncan's master returned to the summer-house, to wait there until he was joined by Blanche.

Sir Patrick showed signs of failing patience during the interval of expectation through which he was now condemned to pass. He applied perpetually to the snuff-box in the knob of his cane. He fidgeted incessantly in and out of the summer-house. Anne's disappearance had placed a serious obstacle in the way of further discovery; and there was no attacking that obstacle, until precious time had been wasted in waiting to see Blanche.

At last she appeared in view, from the steps of the summer-house; breathless and eager, hastening to the place of meeting as fast as her feet would take her to it.

Sir Patrick considerably advanced, to spare her the shock of making the inevitable discovery. "Blanche," he said, "try to prepare yourself, my dear, for a disappointment. I am alone."

“You don’t mean that you have let her go?”

“My poor child! I have never seen her at all.”

Blanche pushed by him and ran into the summer-house. Sir Patrick followed her. She came out again to meet him, with a look of blank despair. “Oh, uncle! I did so truly pity her! And see how little pity she has for *me*!”

Sir Patrick put his arm round his niece, and softly patted the fair young head that dropped on his shoulder.

“Don’t let us judge her harshly, my dear; we don’t know what serious necessity may not plead her excuse. It is plain that she can trust nobody—and that she only consented to see me to get you out of the room and spare you the pain of parting. Compose yourself, Blanche. I don’t despair of discovering where she has gone, if you will help me.”

Blanche lifted her head, and dried her tears bravely.

“My father himself wasn’t kinder to me than you are,” she said. “Only tell me, uncle, what I can do!”

“I want to hear exactly what happened in the library,” said Sir Patrick. “Forget nothing, my dear child, no matter how trifling it may be. Trifles are precious to us, and minutes are precious to us, now.”

Blanche followed her instructions to the letter, her uncle listening with the closest attention. When she had completed her narrative, Sir Patrick suggested leaving the summer-house. “I

have ordered your chaise," he said; "and I can tell you what I propose doing on our way to the stable-yard."

"Let me drive you, uncle."

"Forgive me, my dear, for saying No to that. Your stepmother's suspicions are very easily excited—and you had better not be seen with me if my inquiries take me to the Craig Fernie inn. I promise, if you will remain here, to tell you everything when I come back. Join the others in any plan they have for the afternoon—and you will prevent my absence from exciting anything more than a passing remark. You will do as I tell you? That's a good girl! Now you shall hear how I propose to search for this poor lady, and how your little story has helped me."

He paused, considering with himself whether he should begin by telling Blanche of his consultation with Geoffrey. Once more he decided that question in the negative. Better to still defer taking her into his confidence until he had performed the errand of investigation on which he was now setting forth.

"What you have told me, Blanche, divides itself, in my mind, into two heads," began Sir Patrick. "There is what happened in the library before your own eyes; and there is what Miss Silvester told you had happened at the inn. As to the event in the library (in the first place), it is too late now to inquire whether that fainting-fit was the result, as you say, of mere exhaustion—or whether it was the result of something that occurred while you were out of the room."

“What could have happened while I was out of the room?”

“I know no more than you do, my dear. It is simply one of the possibilities in the case, and, as such, I notice it. To get on to what practically concerns us: if Miss Silvester is in delicate health it is impossible that she could get, unassisted, to any great distance from Windygates. She may have taken refuge in one of the cottages in our immediate neighborhood. Or she may have met with some passing vehicle from one of the farms on its way to the station, and may have asked the person driving to give her a seat in it. Or she may have walked as far as she can, and may have stopped to rest in some sheltered place, among the lanes to the south of this house.”

“I’ll inquire at the cottages, uncle, while you are gone.”

“My dear child, there must be a dozen cottages, at least, within a circle of one mile from Windygates! Your inquiries would probably occupy you for the whole afternoon. I won’t ask what Lady Lundie would think of your being away all that time by yourself. I will only remind you of two things. You would be making a public matter of an investigation which it is essential to pursue as privately as possible; and, even if you happened to hit on the right cottage, your inquiries would be completely baffled, and you would discover nothing.”

“Why not?”

“I know the Scottish peasant better than you

do, Blanche. In his intelligence and his sense of self-respect he is a very different being from the English peasant. He would receive you civilly, because you are a young lady; but he would let you see, at the same time, that he considered you had taken advantage of the difference between your position and his position to commit an intrusion. And if Miss Silvester had appealed, in confidence, to his hospitality, and if he had granted it, no power on earth would induce him to tell any person living that she was under his roof—without her express permission.”

“But, uncle, if it’s of no use making inquiries of anybody, how are we to find her?”

“I don’t say that nobody will answer our inquiries, my dear—I only say the peasantry won’t answer them, if your friend has trusted herself to their protection. The way to find her is to look on, beyond what Miss Silvester may be doing at the present moment, to what Miss Silvester contemplates doing—let us say, before the day is out. We may assume, I think (after what has happened), that, as soon as she *can* leave this neighborhood, she assuredly *will* leave it. Do you agree, so far?”

“Yes! yes! Go on.”

“Very well. She is a woman, and she is (to say the least of it) not strong. She can only leave this neighborhood either by hiring a vehicle or by traveling on the railway. I propose going first to the station. At the rate at which your pony gets over the ground, there is a fair chance, in spite of the time we have lost, of my

being there as soon as she is—assuming that she leaves by the first train, up or down, that passes.”

“There is a train in half an hour, uncle. She can never get there in time for that.”

“She may be less exhausted than we think; or she may get a lift; or she may not be alone. How do we know but somebody may have been waiting in the lane—her husband, if there is such a person—to help her? No! I shall assume she is now on her way to the station; and I shall get there as fast as possible—”

“And stop her, if you find her there?”

“What I do, Blanche, must be left to my discretion. If I find her there, I must act for the best. If I don’t find her there, I shall leave Duncan (who goes with me) on the watch for the remaining trains, until the last to-night. He knows Miss Silvester by sight, and he is sure that *she* has never noticed *him*. Whether she goes north or south, early or late, Duncan will have my orders to follow her. He is thoroughly to be relied on. If she takes the railway, I answer for it we shall know where she goes.”

“How clever of you to think of Duncan!”

“Not in the least, my dear. Duncan is my factotum; and the course I am taking is the obvious course which would have occurred to anybody. Let us get to the really difficult part of it now. Suppose she hires a carriage?”

“There are none to be had, except at the station.”

“There are farmers about here, and farmers have light carts, or chaises, or something of the



sort. It is in the last degree unlikely that they would consent to let her have them. Still, women break through difficulties which stop men. And this is a clever woman, Blanche—a woman, you may depend on it, who is bent on preventing you from tracing her. I confess I wish we had somebody we could trust lounging about where those two roads branch off from the road that leads to the railway. I must go in another direction; *I can't do it.*”

“Arnold can do it!”

Sir Patrick looked a little doubtful. “Arnold is an excellent fellow,” he said. “But can we trust to his discretion?”

“He is, next to you, the most perfectly discreet person I know,” rejoined Blanche, in a very positive manner; “and, what is more, I have told him everything about Anne, except what has happened to-day. I am afraid I shall tell him *that*, when I feel lonely and miserable, after you have gone. There is something in Arnold—I don’t know what it is—that comforts me. Besides, do you think he would betray a secret that I gave him to keep? You don’t know how devoted he is to me!”

“My dear Blanche, I am not the cherished object of his devotion; of course I don’t know! You are the only authority on that point. I stand corrected. Let us have Arnold by all means. Caution him to be careful; and send him out by himself, where the roads meet. We have now only one other place left in which there is a chance of finding a trace of her. I under-



take to make the necessary investigation at the Craig Fernie inn."

"The Craig Fernie inn? Uncle! you have forgotten what I told you."

"Wait a little, my dear. Miss Silvester herself has left the inn, I grant you. But (if we should unhappily fail in finding her by any other means) Miss Silvester has left a trace to guide us at Craig Fernie. That trace must be picked up at once, in case of accidents. You don't seem to follow me? I am getting over the ground as fast as the pony gets over it. I have arrived at the second of those two heads into which your story divides itself in my mind. What did Miss Silvester tell you had happened at the inn?"

"She lost a letter at the inn."

"Exactly. She lost a letter at the inn; that is one event. And Bishopriggs, the waiter, has quarreled with Mrs. Inchbare, and has left his situation; that is another event. As to the letter first. It is either really lost, or it has been stolen. In either case, if we can lay our hands on it, there is at least a chance of its helping us to discover something. As to Bishopriggs, next—"

"You're not going to talk about the waiter, surely?"

"I am! Bishopriggs possesses two important merits. He is a link in my chain of reasoning, and he is an old friend of mine."

"A friend of yours?"

"We live in days, my dear, when one work-

man talks of another workman as 'that gentleman.' I march with the age, and feel bound to mention my clerk as my friend. A few years since Bishopriggs was employed in the clerks' room at my chambers. He is one of the most intelligent and most unscrupulous old vagabonds in Scotland; perfectly honest as to all average matters involving pounds, shillings and pence; perfectly unprincipled in the pursuit of his own interests, where the violation of a trust lies on the boundary-line which marks the limit of the law. I made two unpleasant discoveries when I had him in my employment. I found that he had contrived to supply himself with a duplicate of my seal; and I had the strongest reason to suspect him of tampering with some papers belonging to two of my clients. He had done no actual mischief, so far; and I had no time to waste in making out the necessary case against him. He was dismissed from my service, as a man who was not to be trusted to respect any letters or papers that happened to pass through his hands."

"I see, uncle! I see!"

"Plain enough now—isn't it? If that missing letter of Miss Silvester's is a letter of no importance, I am inclined to believe that it is merely lost, and may be found again. If, on the other hand, there is anything in it that could promise the most remote advantage to any person in possession of it, then, in the execrable slang of the day, I will lay any odds, Blanche, that Bishopriggs has got the letter!"

“And he has left the inn! How unfortunate!”

“Unfortunate as causing delay—nothing worse than that. Unless I am very much mistaken, Bishopriggs will come back to the inn. The old rascal (there is no denying it) is a most amusing person. He left a terrible blank when he left my clerks’ room. Old customers at Craig Fernie (especially the English), in missing Bishopriggs, will, you may rely on it, miss one of the attractions of the inn. Mrs. Inchbare is not a woman to let her dignity stand in the way of her business. She and Bishopriggs will come together again, sooner or later, and make it up. When I have put certain questions to her, which may possibly lead to very important results, I shall leave a letter for Bishopriggs in Mrs. Inchbare’s hands. The letter will tell him I have something for him to do, and will contain an address at which he can write to me. I shall hear of him, Blanche; and, if the letter is in his possession, I shall get it.”

“Won’t he be afraid—if he has stolen the letter—to tell you he has got it?”

“Very well put, my child. He might hesitate with other people. But I have my own way of dealing with him; and I know how to make him tell Me.—Enough of Bishopriggs till his time comes. There is one other point, in regard to Miss Silvester. I may have to describe her. How was she dressed when she came here? Remember, I am a man—and (if an English-woman’s dress *can* be described in an English-

woman's language) tell me, in English, what she had on."

"She wore a straw hat, with corn-flowers in it, and a white veil. Corn-flowers at one side, uncle, which is less common than corn-flowers in front. And she had on a light gray shawl, and a *Piqué*—"

"There you go with your French! Not a word more! A straw hat, with a white veil, and with corn-flowers at one side of the hat. And a light gray shawl. That's as much as the ordinary male mind can take in; and that will do. I have got my instructions, and saved precious time. So far—so good. Here we are at the end of our conference—in other words, at the gate of the stable-yard. You understand what you have to do while I am away?"

"I have to send Arnold to the cross-roads. And I have to behave (if I can) as if nothing had happened."

"Good child! Well put again! You have got what I call grasp of mind, Blanche. An invaluable faculty! You will govern the future domestic kingdom. Arnold will be nothing but a constitutional husband. Those are the only husbands who are thoroughly happy. You shall hear everything, my love, when I come back. Got your bag, Duncan? Good. And the timetable? Good. You take the reins—I won't drive. I want to think. Driving is incompatible with intellectual exertion. A man puts his mind into his horse, and sinks to the level of that useful animal—as a necessary condition of

getting to his destination without being upset. God bless you, Blanche! To the station, Duncan! to the station!"

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-THIRD.

### TRACED.

THE chaise rattled out through the gates. The dogs barked furiously. Sir Patrick looked round, and waved his hand as he turned the corner of the road. Blanche was left alone in the yard.

She lingered a little, absently patting the dogs. They had especial claims on her sympathy at that moment; they, too, evidently thought it hard to be left behind at the house. After a while she roused herself. Sir Patrick had left the responsibility of superintending the cross-roads on her shoulders. There was something to be done yet before the arrangements for tracing Anne were complete. Blanche left the yard to do it.

On her way back to the house she met Arnold, dispatched by Lady Lundie in search of her.

The plan of occupation for the afternoon had been selected during Blanche's absence. Some demon had whispered to Lady Lundie to cultivate a taste for feudal antiquities, and to insist on spreading that taste among her guests. She had proposed an excursion to an old baronial castle among the hills—far to the westward (for-

tunately for Sir Patrick's chance of escaping discovery) of the hills at Craig Fernie. Some of the guests were to ride, and some to accompany their hostess in the open carriage. Looking right and left for proselytes, Lady Lundie had necessarily remarked the disappearance of certain members of her circle. Mr. Delamayn had vanished, nobody knew where. Sir Patrick and Blanche had followed his example. Her ladyship had observed, upon this, with some asperity, that if they were all to treat each other in that unceremonious manner, the sooner Windygates was turned into a Penitentiary, on the silent system, the fitter the house would be for the people who inhabited it. Under these circumstances, Arnold suggested that Blanche would do well to make her excuses as soon as possible at headquarters, and accept the seat in the carriage which her stepmother wished her to take. "We are in for the feudal antiquities, Blanche; and we must help each other through as well as we can. If you will go in the carriage, I'll go too."

Blanche shook her head.

"There are serious reasons for *my* keeping up appearances," she said. "I shall go in the carriage. You mustn't go at all."

Arnold naturally looked a little surprised, and asked to be favored with an explanation.

Blanche took his arm and hugged it close. Now that Anne was lost, Arnold was more precious to her than ever. She literally hungered to hear at that moment, from his own lips, how



fond he was of her. It mattered nothing that she was already perfectly satisfied on this point. It was so nice (after he had said it five hundred times already) to make him say it once more!

"Suppose I had no explanation to give?" she said. "Would you stay behind by yourself to please *me*?"

"I would do anything to please you!"

"Do you really love me as much as that?"

They were still in the yard; and the only witnesses present were the dogs. Arnold answered in the language without words—which is nevertheless the most expressive language in use between men and women all over the world.

"This is not doing my duty," said Blanche, penitently. "But oh, Arnold, I am so anxious and so miserable! And it *is* such a consolation to know that *you* won't turn your back on me too!"

With that preface she told him what had happened in the library. Even Blanche's estimate of her lover's capacity for sympathizing with her was more than realized by the effect which her narrative produced on Arnold. He was not merely surprised and sorry for her. His face showed plainly that he felt genuine concern and distress. He had never stood higher in Blanche's opinion than he stood at that moment.

"What is to be done?" he asked. "How does Sir Patrick propose to find her?"

Blanche repeated Sir Patrick's instructions relating to the cross-roads, and also to the serious necessity of pursuing the investigation in the



strictest privacy. Arnold (relieved from all fear of being sent back to Craig Fernie) undertook to do everything that was asked of him, and promised to keep the secret from everybody.

They went back to the house, and met with an icy welcome from Lady Lundie. Her ladyship repeated her remark on the subject of turning Windygates into a Penitentiary for Blanche's benefit. She received Arnold's petition to be excused from going to see the castle with the barest civility. "Oh, take your walk by all means! You may meet your friend, Mr. Delamayn—who appears to have such a passion for walking that he can't even wait till luncheon is over. As for Sir Patrick— Oh! Sir Patrick has borrowed the pony-carriage? and gone out driving by himself?—I'm sure I never meant to offend my brother-in-law when I offered him a slice of my poor little cake. Don't let me offend anybody else. Dispose of your afternoon, Blanche, without the slightest reference to me. Nobody seems inclined to visit the ruins—the most interesting relic of feudal times in Perthshire, Mr. Brinkworth. It doesn't matter—oh, dear me, it doesn't matter! I can't force my guests to feel an intelligent curiosity on the subject of Scottish Antiquities. No! no! my dear Blanche!—it won't be the first time, or the last, that I have driven out alone. I don't at all object to being alone. 'My mind to me a kingdom is,' as the poet says." So Lady Lundie's outraged self-importance asserted its violated claims on human respect, until her distinguished medical guest came to the res-

cue and smoothed his hostess's ruffled plumes. The surgeon (he privately detested ruins) begged to go. Blanche begged to go. Smith and Jones (profoundly interested in feudal antiquities) said they would sit behind, in the "rumble"—rather than miss this unexpected treat. One, Two and Three caught the infection, and volunteered to be the escort on horseback. Lady Lundie's celebrated "smile" (warranted to remain unaltered on her face for hours together) made its appearance once more. She issued her orders with the most charming amiability. "We'll take the guide-book," said her ladyship, with the eye to mean economy, which is only to be met with in very rich people, "and save a shilling to the man who shows the ruins." With that she went upstairs to array herself for the drive; and looked in the glass; and saw a perfectly virtuous, fascinating, and accomplished woman, facing her irresistibly in a new French bonnet!

At a private signal from Blanche, Arnold slipped out and repaired to his post, where the roads crossed the road that led to the railway.

There was a space of open heath on one side of him, and the stone-wall and gates of a farmhouse inclosure on the other. Arnold sat down on the soft heather—and lighted a cigar—and tried to see his way through the double mystery of Anne's appearance and Anne's flight.

He had interpreted his friend's absence exactly as his friend had anticipated: he could only assume that Geoffrey had gone to keep a private

appointment with Anne. Miss Silvester's appearance at Windygates alone, and Miss Silvester's anxiety to hear the names of the gentlemen who were staying in the house, seemed, under these circumstances, to point to the plain conclusion that the two had in some way unfortunately missed each other. But what could be the motive of her flight? Whether she knew of some other place in which she might meet Geoffrey? or whether she had gone back to the inn? or whether she had acted under some sudden impulse of despair?—were questions which Arnold was necessarily quite incompetent to solve. There was no choice but to wait until an opportunity offered of reporting what had happened to Geoffrey himself.

After the lapse of half an hour, the sound of some approaching vehicle—the first sound of the sort that he had heard—attracted Arnold's attention. He started up, and saw the pony-chaise approaching him along the road from the station. Sir Patrick, this time, was compelled to drive himself—Duncan was not with him. On discovering Arnold, he stopped the pony.

“So! so!” said the old gentleman. “You have heard all about it, I see? You understand that this is to be a secret from everybody, till further notice? Very good. Has anything happened since you have been here?”

“Nothing. Have you made any discoveries, Sir Patrick?”

“None. I got to the station before the train. No signs of Miss Silvester anywhere. I have

left Duncan on the watch—with orders not to stir till the last train has passed to-night.”

“I don’t think she will turn up at the station,” said Arnold. “I fancy she has gone back to Craig Fernie.”

“Quite possible. I am now on my way to Craig Fernie, to make inquiries about her. I don’t know how long I may be detained, or what it may lead to. If you see Blanche before I do, tell her I have instructed the station-master to let me know (if Miss Silvester does take the railway) what place she books for. Thanks to that arrangement, we shan’t have to wait for news till Duncan can telegraph that he has seen her to her journey’s end. In the meantime, you understand what you are wanted to do here?”

“Blanche has explained everything to me.”

“Stick to your post, and make good use of your eyes. You were accustomed to that, you know, when you were at sea. It’s no great hardship to pass a few hours in this delicious summer air. I see you have contracted the vile modern habit of smoking—that will be occupation enough to amuse you, no doubt! Keep the roads in view; and, if she does come your way, don’t attempt to stop her—you can’t do that. Speak to her (quite innocently, mind!), by way of getting time enough to notice the face of the man who is driving her, and the name (if there is one) on his cart. Do that, and you will do enough. Pah! how that cigar poisons the air! What will have become of your stomach when you get to my age?”

"I shan't complain, Sir Patrick, if I can eat as good a dinner as you do."

"That reminds me! I met somebody I knew at the station. Hester Dethridge has left her place, and gone to London by the train. We may feed at Windygates—we have done with dining now. It has been a final quarrel this time between the mistress and the cook. I have given Hester my address in London, and told her to let me know before she decides on another place. A woman who *can't* talk and a woman who *can* cook is simply a woman who has arrived at absolute perfection. Such a treasure shall not go out of the family, if I can help it. Did you notice the Béchamel sauce at lunch? Pooh! a young man who smokes cigars doesn't know the difference between Béchamel sauce and melted butter. Good afternoon! good afternoon!"

He slackened the reins, and away he went to Craig Fernie. Counting by years, the pony was twenty, and the pony's driver was seventy. Counting by vivacity and spirit, two of the most beautiful characters in Scotland had got together that afternoon in the same chaise.

An hour more wore itself slowly out; and nothing had passed Arnold on the cross-roads but a few stray foot-passengers, a heavy wagon, and a gig with an old woman in it. He rose again from the heather, weary of inaction, and resolved to walk backward and forward, within view of his post, for a change. At the second turn, when his face happened to be set toward

the open heath, he noticed another foot-passenger—apparently a man—far away in the empty distance. Was the person coming toward him?

He advanced a little. The stranger was doubtless advancing too, so rapidly did his figure now reveal itself, beyond all doubt, as the figure of a man. A few minutes more, and Arnold fancied he recognized it. Yet a little longer, and he was quite sure. There was no mistaking the lithe strength and grace of *that* man, and the smooth easy swiftness with which he covered his ground. It was the hero of the coming foot-race. It was Geoffrey on his way back to Windygates House. Arnold hurried forward to meet him. Geoffrey stood still, poising himself on his stick, and let the other come up.

“Have you heard what has happened at the house?” asked Arnold.

He instinctively checked the next question as it rose to his lips. There was a settled defiance in the expression of Geoffrey’s face which Arnold was quite at a loss to understand. He looked like a man who had made up his mind to confront anything that could happen, and to contradict anybody who spoke to him.

“Something seems to have annoyed you?” said Arnold.

“What’s up at the house?” returned Geoffrey, with his loudest voice and his hardest look.

“Miss Silvester has been at the house.”

“Who saw her?”

“Nobody but Blanche.”

“Well?”



"Well, she was miserably weak and ill, so ill that she fainted, poor thing, in the library. Blanche brought her to."

"And what then?"

"We were all at lunch at the time. Blanche left the library, to speak privately to her uncle. When she went back Miss Silvester was gone, and nothing has been seen of her since."

"A row at the house?"

"Nobody knows of it at the house, except Blanche—"

"And you? And how many besides?"

"And Sir Patrick. Nobody else."

"Nobody else? Anything more?"

Arnold remembered his promise to keep the investigation then on foot a secret from everybody. Geoffrey's manner made him—unconsciously to himself—readier than he might otherwise have been to consider Geoffrey as included in the general prohibition.

"Nothing more," he answered.

Geoffrey dug the point of his stick deep into the soft, sandy ground. He looked at the stick, then suddenly pulled it out of the ground and looked at Arnold. "Good afternoon!" he said, and went on his way again by himself.

Arnold followed, and stopped him. For a moment the two men looked at each other without a word passing on either side. Arnold spoke first.

"You're out of humor, Geoffrey. What has upset you in this way? Have you and Miss Silvester missed each other?"



Geoffrey was silent.

"Have you seen her since she left Windygates?"

No reply.

"Do you know where Miss Silvester is now?"

Still no reply. Still the same mutely-insolent defiance of look and manner. Arnold's dark color began to deepen.

"Why don't you answer me?" he said.

"Because I have had enough of it."

"Enough of what?"

"Enough of being worried about Miss Silvester. Miss Silvester's my business—not yours."

"Gently, Geoffrey! Don't forget that I have been mixed up in that business—without seeking it myself."

"There's no fear of my forgetting. You have cast it in my teeth often enough."

"Cast it in your teeth?"

"Yes! Am I never to hear the last of my obligation to you? The devil take the obligation! I am sick of the sound of it."

There was a spirit in Arnold—not easily brought to the surface, through the overlaying simplicity and good-humor of his ordinary character—which, once roused, was a spirit not readily quelled. Geoffrey had roused it at last.

"When you come to your senses," he said, "I'll remember old times—and receive your apology. Till you *do* come to your senses, go your way by yourself. I have no more to say to you."

Geoffrey set his teeth, and came one step nearer. Arnold's eyes met his, with a look which

steadily and firmly challenged him—though he *was* the stronger man of the two—to force the quarrel a step further, if he dared. The one human virtue which Geoffrey respected and understood was the virtue of courage. And there it was before him—the undeniable courage of the weaker man. The callous scoundrel was touched on the one tender place in his whole being. He turned, and went on his way in silence.

Left by himself, Arnold's head dropped on his breast. The friend who had saved his life—the one friend he possessed, who was associated with his earliest and happiest remembrances of old days—had grossly insulted him; and had left him deliberately, without the slightest expression of regret. Arnold's affectionate nature—simple, loyal, clinging where it once fastened—was wounded to the quick. Geoffrey's fast-retreating figure, in the open view before him, became blurred and indistinct. He put his hand over his eyes, and hid, with a boyish shame, the hot tears that told of the heart-ache, and that honored the man who shed them.

He was still struggling with the emotion which had overpowered him when something happened at the place where the roads met.

The four roads pointed as nearly as might be toward the four points of the compass. Arnold was now on the road to the eastward, having advanced in that direction to meet Geoffrey, between two and three hundred yards from the farmhouse inclosure before which he had kept his watch. The road to the westward, curving

away behind the farm, led to the nearest market-town. The road to the south was the way to the station. And the road to the north led back to Windygates House.

While Geoffrey was still fifty yards from the turning which would take him back to Windygates—while the tears were still standing thickly in Arnold's eyes—the gate of the farm inclosure opened. A light four-wheeled chaise came out, with a man driving and a woman sitting by his side. The woman was Anne Silvester, and the man was the owner of the farm.

Instead of taking the way which led to the station, the chaise pursued the westward road to the market-town. Proceeding in this direction, the backs of the persons in the vehicle were necessarily turned on Geoffrey, advancing behind them from the eastward. He just carelessly noticed the shabby little chaise, and then turned off north on his way to Windygates.

By the time Arnold was composed enough to look round him, the chaise had taken the curve in the road which wound behind the farmhouse. He returned—faithful to the engagement which he had undertaken—to his post before the inclosure. The chaise was then a speck in the distance. In a minute more it was a speck out of sight.

So (to use Sir Patrick's phrase) had the woman broken through difficulties which would have stopped a man. So, in her sore need, had Anne Silvester won the sympathy which had given her a place, by the farmer's side, in the vehicle that

took him on his own business to the market-town. And so by a hair-breadth did she escape the treble risk of discovery which threatened her—from Geoffrey, on his way back; from Arnold, at his post; and from the valet, on the watch for her appearance at the station.

The afternoon wore on. The servants at Windygates, airing themselves in the grounds—in the absence of their mistress and her guests—were disturbed, for the moment, by the unexpected return of one of “the gentlefolks.” Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn re-appeared at the house, alone; went straight to the smoking-room; and calling for another supply of the old ale, settled himself in an arm-chair with the newspaper, and began to smoke.

He soon tired of reading, and fell into thinking of what had happened during the latter part of his walk.

The prospect before him had more than realized the most sanguine anticipations that he could have formed of it. He had braced himself—after what had happened in the library—to face the outbreak of a serious scandal, on his return to the house. And here—when he came back—was nothing to face! Here were three people (Sir Patrick, Arnold and Blanche) who must at least know that Anne was in some serious trouble, keeping the secret as carefully as if they felt that his interests were at stake! And, more wonderful still, here was Anne herself—so far from raising a hue and cry after him—act-

ually taking flight, without saying a word that could compromise him with any living soul!

What in the name of wonder did it mean? He did his best to find his way to an explanation of some sort; and he actually contrived to account for the silence of Blanche and her uncle, and Arnold. It was pretty clear that they must have all three combined to keep Lady Lundie in ignorance of her runaway governess's return to the house. But the secret of Anne's silence completely baffled him.

He was simply incapable of conceiving that the horror of seeing herself set up as an obstacle to Blanche's marriage might have been vivid enough to overpower all sense of her own wrongs, and to hurry her away, resolute, in her ignorance of what else to do, never to return again, and never to let living eyes rest on her in the character of Arnold's wife. "It's clean beyond *my* making out," was the final conclusion at which Geoffrey arrived. "If it's her interest to hold her tongue, it's my interest to hold mine, and there's an end of it for the present!"

He put up his feet on a chair, and rested his magnificent muscles after his walk, and filled another pipe, in thorough contentment with himself. No interference to dread from Anne, no more awkward questions (on the terms they were on now) to come from Arnold. He looked back at the quarrel on the heath with a certain complacency—he did his friend justice, though they *had* disagreed. "Who would have thought the fellow had so much pluck in him!" he said

to himself as he struck the match and lit his second pipe.

An hour more wore on; and Sir Patrick was the next person who returned.

He was thoughtful, but in no sense depressed. Judging by appearances, his errand to Craig Fernie had certainly not ended in disappointment. The old gentleman hummed his favorite little Scotch air—rather absently, perhaps—and took his pinch of snuff from the knob of his ivory cane much as usual. He went to the library bell and summoned a servant.

“Anybody been here for me?”—“No, Sir Patrick.”—“No letters?”—“No, Sir Patrick.”—“Very well. Come upstairs to my room, and help me on with my dressing-gown.” The man helped him to his dressing-gown and slippers. “Is Miss Lundie at home?”—“No, Sir Patrick. They’re all away with my lady on an excursion.”—“Very good. Get me a cup of coffee; and wake me half an hour before dinner, in case I take a nap.” The servant went out. Sir Patrick stretched himself on the sofa. “Ay! ay! a little aching in the back, and a certain stiffness in the legs. I dare say the pony feels just as I do. Age, I suppose, in both cases? Well! well! well! let’s try and be young at heart. ‘The rest’ (as Pope says) ‘is leather and prunella.’” He returned resignedly to his little Scotch air. The servant came in with the coffee. And then the room was quiet, except for the low humming of insects and the gentle rustling of the creepers at the window. For five minutes or so Sir Patrick



sipped his coffee, and meditated—by no means in the character of a man who was depressed by any recent disappointment. In five minutes more he was asleep.

A little later, and the party returned from the ruins.

With the one exception of their lady-leader, the whole expedition was depressed—Smith and Jones, in particular, being quite speechless. Lady Lundie alone still met feudal antiquities with a cheerful front. She had cheated the man who showed the ruins of his shilling, and she was thoroughly well satisfied with herself. Her voice was flute-like in its melody, and the celebrated “smile” had never been in better order. “Deeply interesting!” said her ladyship, descending from the carriage with ponderous grace, and addressing herself to Geoffrey, lounging under the portico of the house. “You have had a loss, Mr. Delamayn. The next time you go out for a walk, give your hostess a word of warning, and you won’t repent it.” Blanche (looking very weary and anxious) questioned the servant, the moment she got in, about Arnold and her uncle. Sir Patrick was invisible upstairs. Mr. Brinkworth had not come back. It wanted only twenty minutes of dinner-time; and full evening dress was insisted on at Windygates. Blanche, nevertheless, still lingered in the hall in the hope of seeing Arnold before she went upstairs. The hope was realized. As the clock struck the quarter he came in. And he, too, was out of spirits like the rest!



"Have you seen her?" asked Blanche.

"No," said Arnold, in the most perfect good faith. "The way she has escaped by is not the way by the cross-roads—I answer for that."

They separated to dress. When the party assembled again, in the library, before dinner, Blanche found her way, the moment he entered the room, to Sir Patrick's side.

"News, uncle! I'm dying for news."

"Good news, my dear—so far."

"You have found Anne?"

"Not exactly that."

"You have heard of her at Craig Fernie?"

"I have made some important discoveries at Craig Fernie, Blanche. Hush! here's your stepmother. Wait till after dinner, and you may hear more than I can tell you now. There may be news from the station between this and then."

The dinner was a wearisome ordeal to at least two other persons present besides Blanche. Arnold, sitting opposite to Geoffrey, without exchanging a word with him, felt the altered relations between his former friend and himself very painfully. Sir Patrick, missing the skilled hand of Hester Dethridge in every dish that was offered to him, marked the dinner among the wasted opportunities of his life, and resented his sister-in-law's flow of spirits as something simply inhuman under present circumstances. Blanche followed Lady Lundie into the drawing-room in a state of burning impatience for the rising of the gentlemen from their wine. Her stepmother—mapping out a new antiquarian excursion for

the next day, and finding Blanche's ears closed to her occasional remarks on baronial Scotland five hundred years since—lamented, with satirical emphasis, the absence of an intelligent companion of her own sex; and stretched her majestic figure on the sofa to wait until an audience worthy of her flowed in from the dining-room. Before very long—so soothing is the influence of an after-dinner view of feudal antiquities, taken through the medium of an approving conscience—Lady Lundie's eyes closed; and from Lady Lundie's nose there poured, at intervals, a sound, deep, like her ladyship's learning; regular, like her ladyship's habits—a sound associated with night-caps and bedrooms; evoked alike by Nature, the leveler, from high and low—the sound (oh, Truth, what enormities find publicity in thy name!)—the sound of a Snore.

Free to do as she pleased, Blanche left the echoes of the drawing-room in undisturbed enjoyment of Lady Lundie's audible repose.

She went into the library and turned over the novels. Went out again, and looked across the hall at the dining-room door. Would the men never have done talking their politics and drinking their wine? She went up to her own room, and changed her ear-rings, and scolded her maid. Descended once more—and made an alarming discovery in a dark corner of the hall.

Two men were standing there, hat in hand, whispering to the butler. The butler, leaving them, went into the dining-room—came out again with Sir Patrick—and said to the two

men, "Step this way, please." The two men came out into the light. Murdoch, the station-master; and Duncan, the valet! News of Anne!

"Oh, uncle, let me stay!" pleaded Blanche.

Sir Patrick hesitated. It was impossible to say—as matters stood at that moment—what distressing intelligence the two men might not have brought of the missing woman. Duncan's return, accompanied by the station-master, looked serious. Blanche instantly penetrated the secret of her uncle's hesitation. She turned pale, and caught him by the arm. "Don't send me away," she whispered. "I can bear anything but suspense."

"Out with it!" said Sir Patrick, holding his niece's hand. "Is she found or not?"

"She's gone by the up train," said the station-master. "And we know where."

Sir Patrick breathed freely; Blanche's color came back.

In different ways the relief to both of them was equally great.

"You had my orders to follow her," said Sir Patrick to Duncan. "Why have you come back?"

"Your man is not to blame, sir," interposed the station-master. "The lady took the train at Kirkandrew."

Sir Patrick started and looked at the station-master. "Ay? ay? The next station—the market-town. Inexcusably stupid of me. I never thought of that."

"I took the liberty of telegraphing your description of the lady to Kirkandrew, Sir Patrick, in case of accidents."

"I stand corrected, Mr. Murdoch. Your head, in this matter, has been the sharper head of the two. Well?"

"There's the answer, sir."

Sir Patrick and Blanche read the telegram together.

"Kirkandrew. Up train. 7.40 P.M. Lady as described. No luggage. Bag in her hand. Traveling alone. Ticket—second-class. Place—Edinburgh."

"Edinburgh!" repeated Blanche. "Oh, uncle! we shall lose her in a great place like that!"

"We shall find her, my dear; and you shall see how. Duncan, get me pen, ink and paper. Mr. Murdoch, you are going back to the station, I suppose?"

"Yes, Sir Patrick."

"I will give you a telegram, to be sent at once to Edinburgh."

He wrote a carefully-worded telegraphic message, and addressed it to The Sheriff of Mid-Lothian.

"The Sheriff is an old friend of mine," he explained to his niece. "And he is now in Edinburgh. Long before the train gets to the terminus he will receive this personal description of Miss Silvester, with my request to have all her movements carefully watched till further notice. The police are entirely at his disposal, and the best men will be selected for the purpose. I have

asked for an answer by telegraph. Keep a special messenger ready for it at the station, Mr. Murdoch. Thank you; good-evening. Duncan, get your supper, and make yourself comfortable. Blanche, my dear, go back to the drawing-room, and expect us in to tea immediately. You will know where your friend is before you go to bed to-night."

With those comforting words he returned to the gentlemen. In ten minutes more they all appeared in the drawing-room; and Lady Lundie (firmly persuaded that she had never closed her eyes) was back again in baronial Scotland five hundred years since.

Blanche, watching her opportunity, caught her uncle alone.

"Now for your promise," she said. "You have made some important discoveries at Craig Fernie. What are they?"

Sir Patrick's eye turned toward Geoffrey, dozing in an arm-chair in a corner of the room. He showed a certain disposition to trifle with the curiosity of his niece.

"After the discovery we have already made," he said, "can't you wait, my dear, till we get the telegram from Edinburgh?"

"That is just what it's impossible for me to do! The telegram won't come for hours yet. I want something to go on with in the meantime."

She seated herself on a sofa in the corner opposite Geoffrey, and pointed to the vacant place by her side.

Sir Patrick had promised—Sir Patrick had no choice but to keep his word. After another look at Geoffrey, he took the vacant place by his niece.

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FOURTH.

### BACKWARD.

“WELL?” whispered Blanche, taking her uncle confidentially by the arm.

“Well,” said Sir Patrick, with a spark of his satirical humor flashing out at his niece, “I am going to do a very rash thing. I am going to place a serious trust in the hands of a girl of eighteen.”

“The girl’s hands will keep it, uncle—though she *is* only eighteen.”

“I must run the risk, my dear; your intimate knowledge of Miss Silvester may be of the greatest assistance to me in the next step I take. You shall know all that I can tell you, but I must warn you first. I can only admit you into my confidence by startling you with a great surprise. Do you follow me, so far?”

“Yes! yes!”

“If you fail to control yourself, you place an obstacle in the way of my being of some future use to Miss Silvester. Remember that, and now prepare for the surprise. What did I tell you before dinner?”

"You said you had made discoveries at Craig Fernie. What have you found out?"

"I have found out that there is a certain person who is in full possession of the information which Miss Silvester has concealed from you and from me. The person is within our reach. The person is in this neighborhood. The person is in this room!"

He caught up Blanche's hand, resting on his arm, and pressed it significantly. She looked at him with the cry of surprise suspended on her lips—waited a little with her eyes fixed on Sir Patrick's face—struggled resolutely, and composed herself.

"Point the person out." She said the words with a self-possession which won her uncle's hearty approval. Blanche had done wonders for a girl in her teens.

"Look!" said Sir Patrick; "and tell me what you see."

"I see Lady Lundie, at the other end of the room, with the map of Perthshire and the Baronial Antiquities of Scotland on the table. And I see everybody but you and me obliged to listen to her."

"Everybody?"

Blanche looked carefully round the room, and noticed Geoffrey in the opposite corner; fast asleep by this time in his arm-chair.

"Uncle! you don't mean—?"

"There is the man."

"Mr. Delamayn—!"

"Mr. Delamayn knows everything."



Blanche held mechanically by her uncle's arm and looked at the sleeping man as if her eyes could never see enough of him.

"You saw me in the library in private consultation with Mr. Delamayn," resumed Sir Patrick. "I have to acknowledge, my dear, that you were quite right in thinking this a suspicious circumstance. And I am now to justify myself for having purposely kept you in the dark up to the present time."

With those introductory words, he briefly reverted to the earlier occurrences of the day, and then added, by way of commentary, a statement of the conclusions which events had suggested to his own mind.

The events, it may be remembered, were three in number. First, Geoffrey's private conference with Sir Patrick on the subject of Irregular Marriages in Scotland. Secondly, Anne Silvester's appearance at Windygates. Thirdly, Anne's flight.

The conclusions which had thereupon suggested themselves to Sir Patrick's mind were six in number.

First, that a connection of some sort might possibly exist between Geoffrey's acknowledged difficulty about his friend, and Miss Silvester's presumed difficulty about herself. Secondly, that Geoffrey had really put to Sir Patrick—not his own case—but the case of a friend. Thirdly, that Geoffrey had some interest (of no harmless kind) in establishing the fact of his friend's marriage. Fourthly, that Anne's anxiety (as

described by Blanche) to hear the names of the gentlemen who were staying at Windygates, pointed, in all probability, to Geoffrey. Fifthly, that this last inference disturbed the second conclusion, and re-opened the doubt whether Geoffrey had not been stating his own case, after all, under pretense of stating the case of a friend. Sixthly, that the one way of obtaining any enlightenment on this point, and on all the other points involved in mystery, was to go to Craig Fernie, and consult Mrs. Inchbare's experience during the period of Anne's residence at the inn. Sir Patrick's apology for keeping all this a secret from his niece followed. He had shrunk from agitating her on the subject until he could be sure of proving his conclusions to be true. The proof had been obtained; and he was now, therefore, ready to open his mind to Blanche without reserve.

"So much, my dear," proceeded Sir Patrick, "for those necessary explanations which are also the necessary nuisances of human intercourse. You now know as much as I did when I arrived at Craig Fernie—and you are, therefore, in a position to appreciate the value of my discoveries at the inn. Do you understand everything, so far?"

"Perfectly!"

"Very good. I drove up to the inn; and—behold me closeted with Mrs. Inchbare in her own private parlor! (My reputation may or may not suffer, but Mrs. Inchbare's bones are above suspicion!) It was a long business, Blanche. A

more sour-tempered, cunning and distrustful witness I never examined in all my experience at the Bar. She would have upset the temper of any mortal man but a lawyer. We have such wonderful tempers in our profession; and we *can* be so aggravating when we like! In short, my dear, Mrs. Inchbare was a she-cat, and I was a he-cat—and I clawed the truth out of her at last. The result was well worth arriving at, as you shall see. Mr. Delamayn had described to me certain remarkable circumstances as taking place between a lady and a gentleman at an inn: the object of the parties being to pass themselves off at the time as man and wife. Every one of those circumstances, Blanche, occurred at Craig Fernie, between a lady and a gentleman, on the day when Miss Silvester disappeared from this house. And—wait!—being pressed for her name, after the gentleman had left her behind him at the inn, the name the lady gave was, ‘Mrs. Silvester.’ What do you think of that?”

“Think! I’m bewildered—I can’t realize it.”

“It’s a startling discovery, my dear child—there is no denying that. Shall I wait a little, and let you recover yourself?”

“No! no! Go on! The gentleman, uncle? The gentleman who was with Anne? Who is he? Not Mr. Delamayn?”

“Not Mr. Delamayn,” said Sir Patrick. “If I have proved nothing else, I have proved that.”

“What need was there to prove it? Mr. Delamayn went to London on the day of the lawn-party. And Arnold—”

“And Arnold went with him as far as the second station from this. Quite true! But how was I to know what Mr. Delamayn might have done after Arnold had left him? I could only make sure that he had not gone back privately to the inn, by getting the proof from Mrs. Inchbare.”

“How did you get it?”

“I asked her to describe the gentleman who was with Miss Silvester. Mrs. Inchbare’s description (vague as you will presently find it to be) completely exonerates that man,” said Sir Patrick, pointing to Geoffrey, still asleep in his chair. “*He* is not the person who passed Miss Silvester off as his wife at Craig Fernie. He spoke the truth when he described the case to me as the case of a friend.”

“But who is the friend?” persisted Blanche.

“That’s what I want to know.”

“That’s what I want to know, too.”

“Tell me exactly, uncle, what Mrs. Inchbare said. I have lived with Anne all my life. I *must* have seen the man somewhere.”

“If you can identify him by Mrs. Inchbare’s description,” returned Sir Patrick, “you will be a great deal cleverer than I am. Here is the picture of the man, as painted by the landlady: Young; middle-sized; dark hair, eyes and complexion; nice temper; pleasant way of speaking. Leave out ‘young,’ and the rest is the exact contrary of Mr. Delamayn. So far, Mrs. Inchbare guides us plainly enough. But how are we to apply her description to the right person? There

must be, at the lowest computation, five hundred thousand men in England who are young, middle-sized, dark, nice-tempered and pleasant spoken. One of the footmen here answers that description in every particular."

"And Arnold answers it," said Blanche—as a still stronger instance of the provoking vagueness of the description.

"And Arnold answers it," repeated Sir Patrick, quite agreeing with her.

They had barely said those words when Arnold himself appeared, approaching Sir Patrick with a pack of cards in his hand.

There—at the very moment when they had both guessed the truth, without feeling the slightest suspicion of it in their own minds—there stood Discovery, presenting itself unconsciously to eyes incapable of seeing it, in the person of the man who had passed Anne Silvester off as his wife at the Craig Fernie inn! The terrible caprice of Chance, the merciless irony of Circumstance, could go no further than this. The three had their feet on the brink of the precipice at that moment. And two of them were smiling at an odd coincidence; and one of them was shuffling a pack of cards!

"We have done with the Antiquities at last!" said Arnold; "and we are going to play at Whist. Sir Patrick, will you choose a card?"

"Too soon after dinner, my good fellow, for *me*. Play the first rubber, and then give me another chance. By-the-way," he added, "Miss

Silvester has been traced to Kirkandrew. How is it that you never saw her go by?"

"She can't have gone my way, Sir Patrick, or I must have seen her."

Having justified himself in those terms, he was recalled to the other end of the room by the whist-party, impatient for the cards which he had in his hand.

"What were we talking of when he interrupted us?" said Sir Patrick to Blanche.

"Of the man, uncle, who was with Miss Silvester at the inn."

"It's useless to pursue that inquiry, my dear, with nothing better than Mrs. Inchbare's description to help us."

Blanche looked round at the sleeping Geoffrey.

"And *he* knows!" she said. "It's maddening, uncle, to look at the brute snoring in his chair!"

Sir Patrick held up a warning hand. Before a word more could be said between them they were silenced again by another interruption.

The whist-party comprised Lady Lundie and the surgeon, playing as partners against Smith and Jones. Arnold sat behind the surgeon, taking a lesson in the game. One, Two and Three, thus left to their own devices, naturally thought of the billiard-table; and, detecting Geoffrey asleep in his corner, advanced to disturb his slumbers, under the all-sufficing apology of "Pool." Geoffrey roused himself, and rubbed his eyes, and said, drowsily, "All right." As he rose, he looked at the opposite corner in which Sir Patrick and his niece were sitting. Blanche's



self-possession, resolutely as she struggled to preserve it, was not strong enough to keep her eyes from turning toward Geoffrey, with an expression which betrayed the reluctant interest that she now felt in him. He stopped, noticing something entirely new in the look with which the young lady was regarding him.

"Beg your pardon," said Geoffrey. "Do you wish to speak to me?"

Blanche's face flushed all over. Her uncle came to the rescue.

"Miss Lundie and I hope you have slept well, Mr. Delamayn," said Sir Patrick, jocosely. "That's all."

"Oh? That's all?" said Geoffrey, still looking at Blanche. "Beg your pardon again. Deuced long walk, and deuced heavy dinner. Natural consequence—a nap."

Sir Patrick eyed him closely. It was plain that he had been honestly puzzled at finding himself an object of special attention on Blanche's part. "See you in the billiard-room?" he said, carelessly, and followed his companions out of the room—as usual without waiting for an answer."

"Mind what you are about," said Sir Patrick to his niece. "That man is quicker than he looks. We commit a serious mistake if we put him on his guard at starting."

"It shan't happen again, uncle," said Blanche. "But think of *his* being in Anne's confidence, and of *my* being shut out of it!"

"In his friend's confidence, you mean, *my*



dear; and (if we only avoid awakening his suspicion) there is no knowing how soon he may say or do something which may show us who his friend is."

"But he is going back to his brother's to-morrow—he said so at dinner-time."

"So much the better. He will be out of the way of seeing strange things in a certain young lady's face. His brother's house is within easy reach of this; and I am his legal adviser. My experience tells me that he has not done consulting me yet, and that he will let out something more next time. So much for our chance of seeing the light through Mr. Delamayn—if we can't see it in any other way. And that is not our only chance, remember. I have something to tell you about Bishopriggs and the lost letter."

"Is it found?"

"No. I satisfied myself about that—I had it searched for, under my own eye. The letter is stolen, Blanche; and Bishopriggs has got it. I have left a line for him, in Mrs. Inchbare's care. The old rascal is missed already by the visitors at the inn, just as I told you he would be. His mistress is feeling the penalty of having been fool enough to vent her ill temper on her head-waiter. She lays the whole blame of the quarrel on Miss Silvester, of course. Bishopriggs neglected everybody at the inn to wait on Miss Silvester. Bishopriggs was insolent on being remonstrated with, and Miss Silvester encouraged him—and so on. The result will be—now, Miss Silvester has gone—that Bishopriggs will

return to Craig Fernie before the autumn is over. We are sailing with wind and tide, my dear. Come, and learn to play whist."

He rose to join the card-players. Blanche detained him.

"You haven't told me one thing yet," she said. "Whoever the man may be, is Anne married to him?"

"Whoever the man may be," returned Sir Patrick, "he had better not attempt to marry anybody else."

So the niece unconsciously put the question, and so the uncle unconsciously gave the answer, on which depended the whole happiness of Blanche's life to come. The "man!" How lightly they both talked of the "man!" Would nothing happen to rouse the faintest suspicion—in their minds or in Arnold's mind—that Arnold was the "man" himself?

"You mean that she *is* married?" said Blanche.

"I don't go as far as that."

"You mean that she is *not* married?"

"I don't go as far as *that*."

"Oh! the law!"

"Provoking, isn't it, my dear? I can tell you, professionally, that (in my opinion) she has grounds to go on if she claims to be the man's wife. That is what I meant by my answer; and, until we know more, that is all I can say."

"When shall we know more? When shall we get the telegram?"

“Not for some hours yet. Come, and learn to play whist.”

“I think I would rather talk to Arnold, uncle, if you don’t mind.”

“By all means! But don’t talk to him about what I have been telling you to-night. He and Mr. Delamayn are old associates, remember; and he might blunder into telling his friend what his friend had better not know. Sad (isn’t it?) for me to be instilling these lessons of duplicity into the youthful mind. A wise person once said, ‘The older a man gets the worse he gets.’ That wise person, my dear, had me in his eye, and was perfectly right.”

He mitigated the pain of that confession with a pinch of snuff, and went to the whist-table to wait until the end of the rubber gave him a place at the game.

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-FIFTH.

### FORWARD.

BLANCHE found her lover as attentive as usual to her slightest wish, but not in his customary good spirits. He pleaded fatigue, after his long watch at the cross-roads, as an excuse for his depression. As long as there was any hope of a reconciliation with Geoffrey, he was unwilling to tell Blanche what had happened that afternoon. The hope grew fainter and fainter as the evening advanced. Arnold purposely suggested

a visit to the billiard-room, and joined the game, with Blanche, to give Geoffrey an opportunity of saying the few gracious words which would have made them friends again. Geoffrey never spoke the words; he obstinately ignored Arnold's presence in the room.

At the card-table the whist went on interminably. Lady Lundie, Sir Patrick and the surgeon were all inveterate players, evenly matched. Smith and Jones (joining the game alternately) were aids to whist, exactly as they were aids to conversation. The same safe and modest mediocrity of style distinguished the proceedings of these two gentlemen in all the affairs of life.

The time wore on to midnight. They went to bed late and they rose late at Windygates House. Under that hospitable roof, no intrusive hints, in the shape of flat candlesticks exhibiting themselves with ostentatious virtue on side-tables, hurried the guest to his room; no vile bell rang him ruthlessly out of bed the next morning, and insisted on his breakfasting at a given hour. Life has surely hardships enough that are inevitable, without gratuitously adding the hardship of absolute government, administered by a clock?

It was a quarter past twelve when Lady Lundie rose blandly from the whist-table, and said that she supposed somebody must set the example of going to bed. Sir Patrick and Smith, the surgeon and Jones, agreed on a last rubber. Blanche vanished while her stepmother's eye was on her; and appeared again in the drawing-room, when Lady Lundie was safe in the hands

of her maid. Nobody followed the example of the mistress of the house but Arnold. He left the billiard-room with the certainty that it was all over now between Geoffrey and himself. Not even the attraction of Blanche proved strong enough to detain him that night. He went his way to bed.

It was past one o'clock. The final rubber was at an end; the accounts were settled at the card-table; the surgeon had strolled into the billiard-room, and Smith and Jones had followed him, when Duncan came in, at last, with the telegram in his hand.

Blanche turned from the broad, calm autumn moonlight which had drawn her to the window, and looked over her uncle's shoulder while he opened the telegram.

She read the first line—and that was enough. The whole scaffolding of hope built round that morsel of paper fell to the ground in an instant. The train from Kirkandrew had reached Edinburgh at the usual time. Every passenger in it had passed under the eyes of the police; and nothing had been seen of any person who answered the description given of Anne!

Sir Patrick pointed to the last two sentences in the telegram: "Inquiries telegraphed to Falkirk. If with any result, you shall know."

"We must hope for the best, Blanche. They evidently suspect her of having got out at the junction of the two railways for the purpose of giving the telegraph the slip. There is no help for it. Go to bed, child—go to bed."

Blanche kissed her uncle in silence and went away. The bright young face was sad with the first hopeless sorrow which the old man had yet seen in it. His niece's parting look dwelt painfully on his mind when he was up in his room, with the faithful Duncan getting him ready for his bed.

"This is a bad business, Duncan. I don't like to say so to Miss Lundie; but I greatly fear the governess has baffled us."

"It seems likely, Sir Patrick. The poor young lady looks quite heart-broken about it."

"You noticed that too, did you? She has lived all her life, you see, with Miss Silvester; and there is a very strong attachment between them. I am uneasy about my niece, Duncan. I am afraid this disappointment will have a serious effect on her."

"She's young, Sir Patrick."

"Yes, my friend, she's young; but the young (when they are good for anything) have warm hearts. Winter hasn't stolen on *them*, Duncan! And they feel keenly."

"I think there's reason to hope, sir, that Miss Lundie may get over it more easily than you suppose."

"What reason, pray?"

"A person in my position can hardly venture to speak freely, sir, on a delicate matter of this kind."

Sir Patrick's temper flashed out, half-seriously, half-whimsically, as usual.

"Is that a snap at Me, you old dog? If I am

not your friend, as well as your master, who is? Am *I* in the habit of keeping any of my harmless fellow-creatures at a distance? I despise the cant of modern Liberalism; but it's not the less true that I have, all my life, protested against the inhuman separation of classes in England. We are, in that respect, brag as we may of our national virtue, the most unchristian people in the civilized word."

"I beg your pardon, Sir Patrick—"

"God help me! I'm talking politics at this time of night! It's your fault, Duncan. What do you mean by casting my station in my teeth, because I can't put my night-cap on comfortably till you have brushed my hair? I have a good mind to get up and brush yours. There! there! I'm uneasy about my niece—nervous irritability, my good fellow, that's all. Let's hear what you have to say about Miss Lundie. And go on with my hair. And don't be a humbug."

"I was about to remind you, Sir Patrick, that Miss Lundie has another interest in her life to turn to. If this matter of Miss Silvester ends badly—and I own it begins to look as if it would—I should hurry my niece's marriage, sir, and see if *that* wouldn't console her."

Sir Patrick started under the gentle discipline of the hair-brush in Duncan's hand.

"That's very sensibly put," said the old gentleman. "Duncan! you are what I call a clear-minded man. Well worth thinking of, old Truepenny! If the worst comes to the worst, well worth thinking of!"



It was not the first time that Duncan's steady good sense had struck light, under the form of a new thought, in his master's mind. But never yet had he wrought such mischief as the mischief which he had innocently done now. He had sent Sir Patrick to bed with the fatal idea of hastening the marriage of Arnold and Blanche.

The situation of affairs at Windygates—now that Anne had apparently obliterated all trace of herself—was becoming serious. The one chance on which the discovery of Arnold's position depended, was the chance that accident might reveal the truth in the lapse of time. In this posture of circumstances, Sir Patrick now resolved—if nothing happened to relieve Blanche's anxiety in the course of the week—to advance the celebration of the marriage from the end of the autumn (as originally contemplated) to the first fortnight of the ensuing month. As dates then stood, the change led (so far as free scope for the development of accident was concerned) to this serious result. It abridged a lapse of three months into an interval of three weeks.

The next morning came; and Blanche marked it as a memorable morning, by committing an act of imprudence which struck away one more of the chances of discovery that had existed, before the arrival of the Edinburgh telegram on the previous day.

She had passed a sleepless night; fevered in mind and body; thinking, hour after hour, of nothing but Anne. At sunrise she could endure it no longer. Her power to control herself was

completely exhausted; her own impulses led her as they pleased. She got up, determined not to let Geoffrey leave the house without risking an effort to make him reveal what he knew about Anne. It was nothing less than downright treason to Sir Patrick to act on her own responsibility in this way. She knew it was wrong; she was heartily ashamed of herself for doing it. But the demon that possesses women with a recklessness all their own, at the critical moment of their lives, had got her—and she did it.

Geoffrey had arranged, overnight, to breakfast early, by himself, and to walk the ten miles to his brother's house; sending a servant to fetch his luggage later in the day.

He had got on his hat; he was standing in the hall, searching his pocket for his second self, the pipe—when Blanche suddenly appeared from the morning-room, and placed herself between him and the house door.

“Up early—eh?” said Geoffrey. “I’m off to my brother’s.”

She made no reply. He looked at her closer. The girl’s eyes were trying to read his face, with an utter carelessness of concealment, which forbade (even to his mind) all unworthy interpretation of her motive for stopping him on his way out.

“Any commands for me?” he inquired.

This time she answered him. “I have something to ask you,” she said.

He smiled graciously, and opened his tobacco-pouch. He was fresh and strong after his

night's sleep—healthy and handsome and good-humored. The house-maids had had a peep at him that morning, and had wished—like Desdemona, with a difference—that “Heaven had made all three of them such a man.”

“Well,” he said, “what is it?”

She put her question, without a single word of preface—purposely to surprise him.

“Mr. Delamayn,” she said, “do you know where Anne Silvester is this morning?”

He was filling his pipe as she spoke, and he dropped some of the tobacco on the floor. Instead of answering before he picked up the tobacco he answered after—in surly self-possession, and in one word—“No.”

“Do you know nothing about her?”

He devoted himself doggedly to the filling of his pipe. “Nothing.”

“On your word of honor as a gentleman?”

“On my word of honor as a gentleman.”

He put back his tobacco-pouch in his pocket. His handsome face was as hard as stone. His clear blue eyes defied all the girls in England put together to see into *his* mind. “Have you done, Miss Lundie?” he asked, suddenly changing to a bantering politeness of tone and manner.

Blanche saw that it was hopeless—saw that she had compromised her own interests by her own headlong act. Sir Patrick's warning words came back reproachfully to her now when it was too late. “We commit a serious mistake if we put him on his guard at starting.”

There was but one course to take now. "Yes," she said; "I have done."

"My turn now," rejoined Geoffrey. "You want to know where Miss Silvester is. Why do you ask Me?"

Blanche did all that could be done toward repairing the error that she had committed. She kept Geoffrey as far away as Geoffrey had kept *her* from the truth.

"I happen to know," she replied, "that Miss Silvester left the place at which she had been staying about the time when you went out walking yesterday. And I thought you might have seen her."

"Oh? That's the reason—is it?" said Geoffrey, with a smile.

The smile stung Blanche's sensitive temper to the quick. She made a final effort to control herself, before her indignation got the better of her.

"I have no more to say, Mr. Delamayn." With that reply she turned her back on him, and closed the door of the morning-room between them.

Geoffrey descended the house steps and lighted his pipe. He was not at the slightest loss, on this occasion, to account for what had happened. He assumed at once that Arnold had taken a mean revenge on him after his conduct of the day before, and had told the whole secret of his errand at Craig Fernie to Blanche. The thing would get next, no doubt, to Sir Patrick's ears; and Sir Patrick would thereupon be probably the first person who revealed to Arnold the position

in which he had placed himself with Anne. All right! Sir Patrick would be an excellent witness to appeal to, when the scandal broke out, and when the time came for repudiating Anne's claim on him as the barefaced imposture of a woman who was married already to another man. He puffed away unconcernedly at his pipe, and started, at his swinging, steady pace, for his brother's house.

Blanche remained alone in the morning-room. The prospect of getting at the truth, by means of what Geoffrey might say on the next occasion when he consulted Sir Patrick, was a prospect that she herself had closed from that moment. She sat down in despair by the window. It commanded a view of the little side-terrace which had been Anne's favorite walk at Windygates. With weary eyes and aching heart the poor child looked at the familiar place; and asked herself, with the bitter repentance that comes too late, if she had destroyed the last chance of finding Anne!

She sat passively at the window while the hours of the morning wore on, until the postman came. Before the servant could take the letter-bag she was in the hall to receive it. Was it possible to hope that the bag had brought tidings of Anne? She sorted the letters, and lighted suddenly on a letter to herself. It bore the Kirk-andrew post-mark, and it was addressed to her in Anne's handwriting.

She tore the letter open, and read these lines:

"I have left you forever, Blanche. God bless

and reward you! God make you a happy woman in all your life to come! Cruel, as you will think me, love, I have never been so truly your sister as I am now. I can only tell you this—I can never tell you more. Forgive me, and forget me. Our lives are parted lives from this day.”

Going down to breakfast about his usual hour, Sir Patrick missed Blanche, whom he was accustomed to see waiting for him at the table at that time. The room was empty; the other members of the household having all finished their morning meal. Sir Patrick disliked breakfasting alone. He sent Duncan with a message, to be given to Blanche’s maid.

The maid appeared in due time. Miss Lundie was unable to leave her room. She sent a letter to her uncle, with her love—and begged he would read it.

Sir Patrick opened the letter, and saw what Anne had written to Blanche.

He waited a little, reflecting, with evident pain and anxiety, on what he had read—then opened his own letters, and hurriedly looked at the signatures. There was nothing for him from his friend, the sheriff, at Edinburgh, and no communication from the railway, in the shape of a telegram. He had decided, overnight, on waiting till the end of the week before he interfered in the matter of Blanche’s marriage. The events of the morning determined him on not waiting another day. Duncan returned to the breakfast-room to pour out his master’s coffee.



Sir Patrick sent him away again with a second message.

“Do you know where Lady Lundie is, Duncan?”

“Yes, Sir Patrick.”

“My compliments to her ladyship. If she is not otherwise engaged, I shall be glad to speak to her privately in an hour’s time.”

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SIXTH.

### DROPPED.

SIR PATRICK made a bad breakfast. Blanche’s absence fretted him, and Anne Silvester’s letter puzzled him.

He read it, short as it was, a second time, and a third. If it meant anything, it meant that the motive at the bottom of Anne’s flight was to accomplish the sacrifice of herself to the happiness of Blanche. She had parted for life from his niece for his niece’s sake! What did this mean? And how was it to be reconciled with Anne’s position—as described to him by Mrs. Inchbare during his visit to Craig Fernie.

All Sir Patrick’s ingenuity, and all Sir Patrick’s experience, failed to find so much as the shadow of an answer to that question.

While he was still pondering over the letter, Arnold and the surgeon entered the breakfast-room together.

“Have you heard about Blanche?” asked



Arnold, excitedly. "She is in no danger, Sir Patrick—the worst of it is over now."

The surgeon interposed before Sir Patrick could appeal to him.

"Mr. Brinkworth's interest in the young lady a little exaggerates the state of the case," he said. "I have seen her, at Lady Lundie's request; and I can assure you that there is not the slightest reason for any present alarm. Miss Lundie has had a nervous attack, which has yielded to the simplest domestic remedies. The only anxiety you need feel is connected with the management of her in the future. She is suffering from some mental distress, which it is not for me, but for her friends, to alleviate and remove. If you can turn her thoughts from the painful subject—whatever it may be—on which they are dwelling now, you will do all that needs to be done." He took up a newspaper from the table, and strolled out into the garden, leaving Sir Patrick and Arnold together.

"You heard that?" said Sir Patrick

"Is he right, do you think?" asked Arnold.

"Right? Do you suppose a man gets *his* reputation by making mistakes? You're one of the new generation, Master Arnold. You can all of you stare at a famous man; but you haven't an atom of respect for his fame. If Shakespeare came to life again, and talked of play-writing, the first pretentious nobody who sat opposite at dinner would differ with him as composedly as he might differ with you and me. Veneration is dead among us; the present age has buried it,

without a stone to mark the place. So much for that! Let's get back to Blanche. I suppose you can guess what the painful subject is that's dwelling on her mind? Miss Silvester has baffled me, and baffled the Edinburgh police. Blanche discovered that we had failed last night, and Blanche received that letter this morning."

He pushed Anne's letter across the breakfast-table.

Arnold read it, and handed it back without a word. Viewed by the new light in which he saw Geoffrey's character after the quarrel on the heath, the letter conveyed but one conclusion to his mind. Geoffrey had deserted her.

"Well?" said Sir Patrick. "Do you understand what it means?"

"I understand Blanche's wretchedness when she read it."

He said no more than that. It was plain that no information which he could afford—even if he had considered himself at liberty to give it—would be of the slightest use in assisting Sir Patrick to trace Miss Silvester, under present circumstances. There was—unhappily—no temptation to induce him to break the honorable silence which he had maintained thus far. And—more unfortunately still—assuming the temptation to present itself, Arnold's capacity to resist it had never been so strong a capacity as it was now.

To the two powerful motives which had hitherto tied his tongue—respect for Anne's reputation, and reluctance to reveal to Blanche the de-

ception which he had been compelled to practice on her at the inn—to these two motives there was now added a third. The meanness of betraying the confidence which Geoffrey had reposed in him would be doubled meanness if he proved false to his trust after Geoffrey had personally insulted him. The paltry revenge which that false friend had unhesitatingly suspected him of taking was a revenge of which Arnold's nature was simply incapable. Never had his lips been more effectually sealed than at this moment—when his whole future depended on Sir Patrick's discovering the part that he had played in past events at Craig Fernie.

“Yes! yes!” resumed Sir Patrick, impatiently. “Blanche's distress is intelligible enough. But here is my niece apparently answerable for this unhappy woman's disappearance. Can you explain what my niece has got to do with it?”

“I! Blanche herself is completely mystified. How should *I* know?”

Answering in those terms, he spoke with perfect sincerity. Anne's vague distrust of the position in which they had innocently placed themselves at the inn had produced no corresponding effect on Arnold at the time. He had not regarded it; he had not even understood it. As a necessary result, not the faintest suspicion of the motive under which Anne was acting existed in his mind now.

Sir Patrick put the letter into his pocket-book, and abandoned all further attempt at interpreting the meaning of it in despair.

"Enough, and more than enough, of groping in the dark," he said. "One point is clear to me, after what has happened upstairs this morning. We must accept the position in which Miss Silvester has placed us. I shall give up all further effort to trace her from this moment."

"Surely that will be a dreadful disappointment to Blanche, Sir Patrick?"

"I don't deny it. We must face that result."

"If you are sure there is nothing else to be done, I suppose we must."

"I am not sure of anything of the sort, Master Arnold! There are two chances still left of throwing light on this matter, which are both of them independent of anything that Miss Silvester can do to keep it in the dark."

"Then why not try them, sir? It seems hard to drop Miss Silvester when she is in trouble."

"We can't help her against her own will," rejoined Sir Patrick. "And we can't run the risk, after that nervous attack this morning, of subjecting Blanche to any further suspense. I have thought of my niece's interests throughout this business; and if I now change my mind, and decline to agitate her by more experiments, ending (quite possibly) in more failures, it is because I am thinking of her interests still. I have no other motive. However numerous my weaknesses may be, ambition to distinguish myself as a detective policeman is not one of them. The case, from the police point of view, is by no means a lost case. I drop it, nevertheless, for Blanche's sake. Instead of encouraging her

thoughts to dwell on this melancholy business, we must apply the remedy suggested by our medical friend."

"How is that to be done?" asked Arnold.

The sly twist of humor began to show itself in Sir Patrick's face.

"Has she nothing to think of in the future, which is a pleasanter subject of reflection than the loss of her friend?" he asked. "*You* are interested, my young gentleman, in the remedy that is to cure Blanche. *You* are one of the drugs in the moral prescription. Can you guess what it is?"

Arnold started to his feet, and brightened into a new being.

"Perhaps you object to be hurried?" said Sir Patrick.

"Object! If Blanche will only consent, I'll take her to church as soon as she comes downstairs!"

"Thank you!" said Sir Patrick, dryly. "Mr. Arnold Brinkworth, may you always be as ready to take Time by the forelock as you are now! Sit down again; and don't talk nonsense. It is just possible—if Blanche consents (as you say), and if we can hurry the lawyers—that you may be married in three weeks' or a month's time."

"What have the lawyers got to do with it?"

"My good fellow, this is not a marriage in a novel! This is the most unromantic affair of the sort that ever happened. Here are a young gentleman and a young lady, both rich people,

both well matched in birth and character; one of age, and the other marrying with the full consent and approval of her guardian. What is the consequence of this purely prosaic state of things? Lawyers and settlements, of course!"

"Come into the library, Sir Patrick; and I'll soon settle the settlements! A bit of paper, and a dip of ink. 'I hereby give every blessed farthing I have got in the world to my dear Blanche.' Sign that; stick a wafer on at the side; clap your finger on the wafer; 'I deliver this as my act and deed;' and there it is—done!"

"Is it, really? You are a born legislator. You create and codify your own system all in a breath. Moses-Justinian-Mohammed, give me your arm! there is one atom of sense in what you have just said. 'Come into the library'—is a suggestion worth attending to. Do you happen, among your other superfluities, to have such a thing as a lawyer about you?"

"I have got two. One in London, and one in Edinburgh."

"We will take the nearest of the two, because we are in a hurry. Who is the Edinburgh lawyer? Pringle of Pitt Street? Couldn't be a better man. Come and write to him. You have given me your abstract of a marriage settlement with the brevity of an ancient Roman. I scorn to be outdone by an amateur lawyer. Here is *my* abstract: you are just and generous to Blanche; Blanche is just and generous to you; and you both combine to be just and generous together to your children. There is a model



settlement! and there are your instructions to Pringle of Pitt Street! Can you do it by yourself? No; of course you can't. Now don't be slovenly-minded! See the points in their order as they come. You are going to be married; you state to whom; you add that I am the lady's guardian; you give the name and address of my lawyer in Edinburgh; you write your instructions plainly in the fewest words, and leave details to your legal adviser; you refer the lawyers to each other; you request that the draft settlements be prepared as speedily as possible; and you give your address at this house. There are the heads. Can't you do it now? Oh, the rising generation! Oh! the progress we are making in these enlightened modern times! There! there! you can marry Blanche, and make her happy, and increase the population—and all without knowing how to write the English language. One can only say with the learned Bevoriskius, looking out of his window at the illimitable loves of the sparrows, 'How merciful is Heaven to its creatures!' Take up the pen. I'll dictate! I'll dictate!"

Sir Patrick read the letter over, approved of it, and saw it safe in the box for the post. This done, he peremptorily forbade Arnold to speak to his niece on the subject of the marriage without his express permission. "There's somebody else's consent to be got," he said, "besides Blanche's consent and mine."

"Lady Lundie?"

"Lady Lundie. Strictly speaking, I am the



only authority. But my sister-in-law is Blanche's stepmother, and she is appointed guardian in the event of my death. She has a right to be consulted—in courtesy, if not in law. Would you like to do it?"

Arnold's face fell. He looked at Sir Patrick in silent dismay.

"What! you can't even speak to such a perfectly pliable person as Lady Lundie? You may have been a very useful fellow at sea. A more helpless young man I never met with on shore. Get out with you into the garden among the other sparrows! Somebody must confront her ladyship. And if you won't—I must."

He pushed Arnold out of the library, and applied meditatively to the knob of his cane. His gayety disappeared, now that he was alone. His experience of Lady Lundie's character told him that, in attempting to win her approval to any scheme for hurrying Blanche's marriage, he was undertaking no easy task. "I suppose," mused Sir Patrick, thinking of his late brother—"I suppose poor Tom had some way of managing her. How did he do it, I wonder? If she had been the wife of a bricklayer, she is the sort of woman who would have been kept in perfect order by a vigorous and regular application of her husband's fist. But Tom wasn't a bricklayer. I wonder how Tom did it?" After a little hard thinking on this point, Sir Patrick gave up the problem as beyond human solution. "It must be done," he concluded. "And my own mother-wit must help me to do it."

In that resigned frame of mind he knocked at the door of Lady Lundie's boudoir.

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-SEVENTH.

### OUTWITTED.

SIR PATRICK found his sister-in-law immersed in domestic business. Her ladyship's correspondence and visiting list; her ladyship's household bills and ledgers; her ladyship's Diary and Memorandum-book (bound in scarlet morocco); her ladyship's desk, envelope-case, match-box, and taper candlestick (all in ebony and silver); her ladyship herself, presiding over her responsibilities, and wielding her materials, equal to any calls of emergency, beautifully dressed in correct morning costume, blessed with perfect health both of the secretions and the principles; absolutely void of vice, and formidably full of virtue, presented, to every properly-constituted mind, the most imposing spectacle known to humanity—the British Matron on her throne, asking the world in general, When will you produce the like of me?

"I am afraid I disturb you," said Sir Patrick. "I am a perfectly idle person. Shall I look in a little later?"

Lady Lundie put her hand to her head, and smiled faintly.

"A little pressure *here*, Sir Patrick. Pray sit down. Duty finds me earnest; Duty finds me

cheerful; Duty finds me accessible. From a poor, weak woman, Duty must expect no more. Now what is it?" (Her ladyship consulted her scarlet memorandum-book.) "I have got it here, under its proper head, distinguished by initial letters. P.—the poor. No. H. M.—heathen missions. No. V. T. A.—Visitors to arrive. No. P. I. P.—Here it is: private interview with Patrick. Will you forgive me the little harmless familiarity of omitting your title? Thank you! You are always so good. I am quite at your service when you like to begin. If it's anything painful, pray don't hesitate. I am quite prepared."

With that intimation her ladyship threw herself back in her chair, with her elbows on the arms, and her fingers joined at the tips, as if she was receiving a deputation. "Yes?" she said, interrogatively. Sir Patrick paid a private tribute of pity to his late brother's memory, and entered on his business.

"We won't call it a painful matter," he began. "Let us say it's a matter of domestic anxiety. Blanche—"

Lady Lundie emitted a faint scream, and put her hand over her eyes.

"*Must* you?" cried her ladyship, in a tone of touching remonstrance. "Oh, Sir Patrick, *must* you?"

"Yes; I must."

Lady Lundie's magnificent eyes looked up at that hidden court of human appeal which is lodged in the ceiling. The hidden court looked

down at Lady Lundie, and saw—Duty advertising itself in the largest capital letters.

“Go on, Sir Patrick. The motto of woman is Self-sacrifice. You shan’t see how you distress me. Go on.”

Sir Patrick went on impenetrably—without betraying the slightest expression of sympathy or surprise.

“I was about to refer to the nervous attack from which Blanche has suffered this morning,” he said. “May I ask whether you have been informed of the cause to which the attack is attributable?”

“There!” exclaimed Lady Lundie, with a sudden bound in her chair, and a sudden development of vocal power to correspond. “The one thing I shrank from speaking of! the cruel, cruel, cruel behavior I was prepared to pass over! And Sir Patrick hints on it! Innocently—don’t let me do an injustice—innocently hints on it!”

“Hints on what, my dear madam?”

“Blanche’s conduct to me this morning. Blanche’s heartless secrecy. Blanche’s undutiful silence. I repeat the words: Heartless secrecy. Undutiful silence.”

“Allow me for one moment, Lady Lundie—”

“Allow *me*, Sir Patrick! Heaven knows how unwilling I am to speak of it. Heaven knows that not a word of reference to it escaped *my* lips. But you leave me no choice now. As mistress of the household, as a Christian woman, as the widow of your dear brother, as a mother to this misguided girl, I must state the facts. I **know**

you mean well; I know you wish to spare me. Quite useless! I must state the facts."

Sir Patrick bowed, and submitted. (If he had only been a bricklayer! and if Lady Lundie had not been, what her ladyship unquestionably was, the strongest person of the two!)

"Permit me to draw a veil, for your sake," said Lady Lundie, "over the horrors—I cannot, with the best wish to spare you, conscientiously call them by any other name—the horrors that took place upstairs. The moment I heard that Blanche was ill I was at my post. Duty will always find me ready, Sir Patrick, to my dying day. Shocking as the whole thing was, I presided calmly over the screams and sobs of my stepdaughter. I closed my ears to the profane violence of her language. I set the necessary example, as an English gentlewoman at the head of her household. It was only when I distinctly heard the name of a person, never to be mentioned again in my family circle, issue (if I may use the expression) from Blanche's lips that I began to be really alarmed. I said to my maid: 'Hopkins, this is not Hysteria. This is a possession of the devil. Fetch the chloroform.' "

Chloroform, applied in the capacity of an exorcism, was entirely new to Sir Patrick. He preserved his gravity with considerable difficulty. Lady Lundie went on:

"Hopkins is an excellent person—but Hopkins had a tongue. She met our distinguished medical guest in the corridor, and told him. He was so good as to come to the door. I was shocked

to trouble him to act in his professional capacity, while he was a visitor, an honored visitor, in my house. Besides, I considered it more a case for a clergyman than for a medical man. However, there was no help for it after Hopkins's tongue. I requested our eminent friend to favor us with—I think the exact scientific term is—a Prognosis. He took the purely material view which was only to be expected from a person in his profession. He prognosed—*am* I right? Did he prognose? or did he diagnose? A habit of speaking correctly is so important, Sir Patrick! and I should be so grieved to mislead you!"

"Never mind, Lady Lundie! I have heard the medical report. Don't trouble yourself to repeat it."

"Don't trouble myself to repeat it?" echoed Lady Lundie, with her dignity up in arms at the bare prospect of finding her remarks abridged. "Ah, Sir Patrick! that little constitutional impatience of yours!—Oh, dear me! how often you must have given way to it, and how often you must have regretted it, in your time!"

"My dear lady! if you wish to repeat the report, why not say so, in plain words? Don't let me hurry you. Let us have the prognosis, by all means."

Lady Lundie shook her head compassionately and smiled with angelic sadness. "Our little besetting sins!" she said. "What slaves we are to our little besetting sins! Take a turn in the room—do!"

Any ordinary man would have lost his temper.

But the law (as Sir Patrick had told his niece) has a special temper of its own. Without exhibiting the smallest irritation, Sir Patrick dexterously applied his sister-in-law's blister to his sister-in-law herself.

"What an eye you have!" he said. "*I was* impatient. *I am* impatient. I am dying to know what Blanche said to you when she got better?"

The British Matron froze up into a matron of stone on the spot.

"Nothing!" answered her ladyship, with a vicious snap of her teeth, as if she had tried to bite the word before it escaped her.

"Nothing!" exclaimed Sir Patrick.

"Nothing," repeated Lady Lundie, with her most formidable emphasis of look and tone. "I applied all the remedies with my own hands; I cut her laces with my own scissors; I completely wetted her head through with cold water; I remained with her until she was quite exhausted; I took her in my arms, and folded her to my bosom; I sent everybody out of the room; I said, 'Dear child, confide in me.' And how were my advances—my motherly advances—met? I have already told you. By heartless secrecy. By undutiful silence."

Sir Patrick pressed the blister a little closer to the skin. "She was probably afraid to speak," he said.

"Afraid? Oh!" cried Lady Lundie, distrusting the evidence of her own senses. "You can't have said that? I have evidently misapprehended you. You didn't really say afraid?"



"I said she was probably afraid—"

"Stop! I can't be told to my face that I have failed to do my duty by Blanche. No, Sir Patrick! I can bear a great deal; but I can't bear that. After having been more than a mother to your dear brother's child; after having been an elder sister to Blanche; after having toiled—I say *toiled*, Sir Patrick!—to cultivate her intelligence (with the sweet lines of the poet ever present to my memory: 'Delightful task to rear the tender mind, and teach the young idea how to shoot!'); after having done all I have done—a place in the carriage only yesterday, and a visit to the most interesting relic of feudal times in Perthshire—after having sacrificed all I have sacrificed, to be told that I have behaved in such a manner to Blanche as to frighten her when I ask her to confide in me, is a little too cruel. I have a sensitive, an unduly sensitive nature, dear Sir Patrick. Forgive me for wincing when I am wounded. Forgive me for feeling it when the wound is dealt me by a person whom I revere."

Her ladyship put her handkerchief to her eyes.

Any other man would have taken off the blister. Sir Patrick pressed it harder than ever.

"You quite mistake me," he replied. "I meant that Blanche was afraid to tell you the true cause of her illness. The true cause is anxiety about Miss Silvester."

Lady Lundie emitted another scream—a loud scream this time—and closed her eyes in horror.

"I can run out of the house," cried her lady-

ship, wildly. "I can fly to the uttermost corners of the earth; but I *cannot* hear that person's name mentioned! No, Sir Patrick! not in my presence! not in my room! not while I am mistress at Windygates House!"

"I am sorry to say anything that is disagreeable to you, Lady Lundie. But the nature of my errand here obliges me to touch—as lightly as possible—on something which has happened in your house without your knowledge."

Lady Lundie suddenly opened her eyes, and became the picture of attention. A casual observer might have supposed her ladyship to be not wholly inaccessible to the vulgar emotion of curiosity.

"A visitor came to Windygates yesterday, while we were all at lunch," proceeded Sir Patrick. "She—"

Lady Lundie seized the scarlet memorandum-book, and stopped her brother-in-law, before he could get any further. Her ladyship's next words escaped her lips spasmodically, like words let at intervals out of a trap.

"I undertake—as a woman accustomed to self-restraint, Sir Patrick—I undertake to control myself, on one condition. I won't have the name mentioned. I won't have the sex mentioned. Say 'The Person,' if you please. 'The Person,' " continued Lady Lundie, opening her memorandum-book and taking up her pen, "committed an audacious invasion of my premises yesterday!"

Sir Patrick bowed. Her ladyship made a note

—a fiercely-penned note that scratched the paper viciously—and then proceeded to examine her brother-in-law, in the capacity of witness.

“What part of my house did ‘The Person’ invade? Be very careful, Sir Patrick! I propose to place myself under the protection of a justice of the peace; and this is a memorandum of my statement. The library—did I understand you to say? Just so—the library.”

“Add,” said Sir Patrick, with another pressure on the blister, “that The Person had an interview with Blanche in the library.”

Lady Lundie’s pen suddenly stuck in the paper, and scattered a little shower of ink-drops all round it. “The library,” repeated her ladyship in a voice suggestive of approaching suffocation. “I undertake to control myself, Sir Patrick! Anything missing from the library?”

“Nothing missing, Lady Lundie, but The Person herself. She—”

“No, Sir Patrick! I won’t have it! In the name of my own sex, I won’t have it!”

“Pray pardon me—I forgot that ‘she’ was a prohibited pronoun on the present occasion. The Person has written a farewell letter to Blanche, and has gone nobody knows where. The distress produced by these events is alone answerable for what has happened to Blanche this morning. If you bear that in mind—and if you remember what your own opinion is of Miss Silvester—you will understand why Blanche hesitated to admit you into her confidence.”

There he waited for a reply. Lady Lundie

was too deeply absorbed in completing her memorandum to be conscious of his presence in the room.

“ ‘Carriage to be at the door at two-thirty,’ ” said Lady Lundie, repeating the final words of the memorandum while she wrote them. “ ‘Inquire for the nearest justice of the peace, and place the privacy of Windygates under the protection of the law.’—I beg your pardon!” exclaimed her ladyship, becoming conscious again of Sir Patrick’s presence. “Have I missed anything particularly painful? Pray mention it if I have!”

“You have missed nothing of the slightest importance,” returned Sir Patrick. “I have placed you in possession of facts which you had a right to know; and we have now only to return to our medical friend’s report on Blanche’s health. You were about to favor me, I think, with the Prognosis?”

“Diagnosis!” said her ladyship, spitefully. “I had forgotten at the time—I remember now. Prognosis is entirely wrong.”

“I sit corrected, Lady Lundie. Diagnosis.”

“You have informed me, Sir Patrick, that you were already acquainted with the Diagnosis. It is quite needless for me to repeat it now.”

“I was anxious to correct my own impression, my dear lady, by comparing it with yours.”

“You are very good. You are a learned man. I am only a poor ignorant woman. Your impression cannot possibly require correcting by mine.”

"My impression, Lady Lundie, was that our friend recommended moral, rather than medical, treatment for Blanche. If we can turn her thoughts from the painful subject on which they are now dwelling, we shall do all that is needful. Those were his own words, as I remember them. Do you confirm me?"

"Can *I* presume to dispute with *you*, Sir Patrick? You are a master of refined irony, I know. I am afraid it's all thrown away on poor me."

(The law kept its wonderful temper! The law met the most exasperating of living women with a counter-power of defensive aggravation all its own!)

"I take that as confirming me, Lady Lundie. Thank you. Now as to the method of carrying out our friend's advice. The method seems plain. All we can do to divert Blanche's mind is to turn Blanche's attention to some other subject of reflection less painful than the subject which occupies her now. Do you agree, so far?"

"Why place the whole responsibility on *my* shoulders?" inquired Lady Lundie.

"Out of profound deference for your opinion," answered Sir Patrick. "Strictly speaking, no doubt, any serious responsibility rests with me. I am Blanche's guardian—"

"Thank God!" cried Lady Lundie, with a perfect explosion of pious fervor.

"I hear an outburst of devout thankfulness," remarked Sir Patrick. "Am I to take it as expressing—let me say—some little doubt, on your

part, as to the prospect of managing Blanche successfully, under present circumstances?"

Lady Lundie's temper began to give way again—exactly as her brother-in-law had anticipated.

"You are to take it," she said, "as expressing my conviction that I saddled myself with the charge of an incorrigibly heartless, obstinate, and perverse girl, when I undertook the care of Blanche."

"Did you say 'incorrigibly?'"

"I said 'incorrigibly.'"

"If the case is as hopeless as that, my dear Madam—as Blanche's guardian, I ought to find means to relieve you of the charge of Blanche."

"Nobody shall relieve *me* of a duty that I have once undertaken!" retorted Lady Lundie. "Not if I die at my post!"

"Suppose it was consistent with your duty," pleaded Sir Patrick, "to be relieved at your post? Suppose it was in harmony with that 'self-sacrifice' which is 'the motto of women?'"

"I don't understand you, Sir Patrick. Be so good as to explain yourself."

Sir Patrick assumed a new character—the character of a hesitating man. He cast a look of respectful inquiry at his sister-in-law, sighed, and shook his head.

"No!" he said. "It would be asking too much. Even with your high standard of duty, it would be asking too much."

"Nothing which you can ask me in the name of duty is too much."

"No! no! Let me remind you. Human nature has its limits."

"A Christian gentlewoman's sense of duty knows no limits."

"Oh, surely yes!"

"Sir Patrick! after what I have just said, your perseverance in doubting me amounts to something like an insult!"

"Don't say that! Let me put a case. Let us suppose the future interests of another person to depend on your saying Yes—when all your own most cherished ideas and opinions urge you to say No. Do you really mean to tell me that you could trample your own convictions under foot, if it could be shown that the purely abstract consideration of duty was involved in the sacrifice?"

"Yes!" cried Lady Lundie, mounting the pedestal of her virtue on the spot. "Yes—without a moment's hesitation!"

"I sit corrected, Lady Lundie. You embolden me to proceed. Allow me to ask (after what I have just heard)—whether it is not your duty to act on advice given for Blanche's benefit, by one of the highest medical authorities in England?"

Her ladyship admitted that it was her duty; pending a more favorable opportunity for contradicting her brother-in-law.

"Very good," pursued Sir Patrick. "Assuming that Blanche is like most other human beings, and has some prospect of happiness to contemplate, if she could only be made to see it—are we not bound to make her see it, by our moral obligation to act on the medical advice?" He cast



a courteously-persuasive look at her ladyship, and paused in the most innocent manner for a reply.

If Lady Lundie had not been bent—thanks to the irritation fomented by her brother-in-law—on disputing the ground with him, inch by inch, she must have seen signs, by this time, of the snare that was being set for her. As it was, she saw nothing but the opportunity of disparaging Blanche and contradicting Sir Patrick.

“If my stepdaughter had any such prospect as you describe,” she answered, “I should of course say Yes. But Blanche’s is an ill-regulated mind. An ill-regulated mind has no prospect of happiness.”

“Pardon me,” said Sir Patrick. “Blanche *has* a prospect of happiness. In other words, Blanche has a prospect of being married. And, what is more, Arnold Brinkworth is ready to marry her as soon as the settlements can be prepared.”

Lady Lundie started in her chair—turned crimson with rage—and opened her lips to speak. Sir Patrick rose to his feet, and went on before she could utter a word.

“I beg to relieve you, Lady Lundie—by means which you have just acknowledged it to be your duty to accept—of all further charge of an incorrigible girl. As Blanche’s guardian, I have the honor of proposing that her marriage be advanced to a day to be hereafter named in the first fortnight of the ensuing month.”

In those words he closed the trap which he had

set for his sister-in-law, and waited to see what came of it.

A thoroughly spiteful woman, thoroughly roused, is capable of subordinating every other consideration to the one imperative necessity of gratifying her spite. There was but one way now of turning the tables on Sir Patrick—and Lady Lundie took it. She hated him, at that moment, so intensely, that not even the assertion of her own obstinate will promised her more than a tame satisfaction, by comparison with the priceless enjoyment of beating her brother-in-law with his own weapons.

“My dear Sir Patrick!” she said, with a little silvery laugh, “you have wasted much precious time and many eloquent words in trying to entrap me into giving my consent, when you might have had it for the asking. I think the idea of hastening Blanche’s marriage an excellent one. I am charmed to transfer the charge of such a person as my stepdaughter to the unfortunate young man who is willing to take her off my hands. The less he sees of Blanche’s character the more satisfied I shall feel of his performing his engagement to marry her. Pray hurry the lawyers, Sir Patrick, and let it be a week sooner rather than a week later, if you wish to please Me.”

Her ladyship rose in her grandest proportions, and made a courtesy which was nothing less than a triumph of polite satire in dumb show. Sir Patrick answered by a profound bow and a smile which said eloquently, “I believe every

word of that charming answer. Admirable woman—adieu!”

So the one person in the family circle, whose opposition might have forced Sir Patrick to submit to a timely delay, was silenced by adroit management of the vices of her own character. So, in despite of herself, Lady Lundie was won over to the project for hurrying the marriage of Arnold and Blanche.

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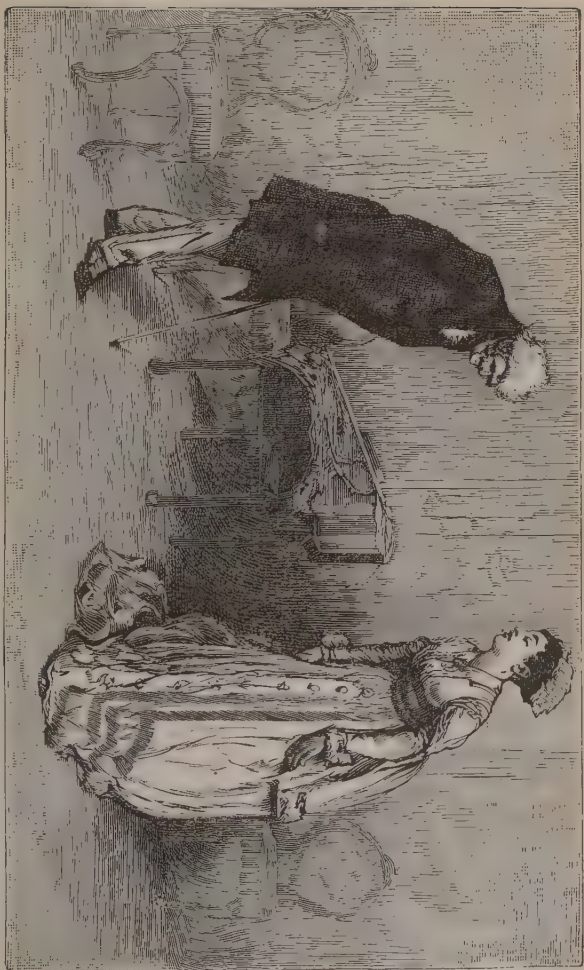
## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-EIGHTH.

### STIFLED.

IT is the nature of Truth to struggle to the light. In more than one direction, the truth strove to pierce the overlying darkness, and to reveal itself to view, during the interval between the date of Sir Patrick's victory and the date of the wedding-day.

Signs of perturbation under the surface, suggestive of some hidden influence at work, were not wanting, as the time passed on. The one thing missing was the prophetic faculty that could read those signs aright at Windygates House.

On the very day when Sir Patrick's dexterous treatment of his sister-in-law had smoothed the way to the hastening of the marriage, an obstacle was raised to the new arrangement by no less a person than Blanche herself. She had sufficiently recovered, toward noon, to be able to



“ADMIRABLE WOMAN—ADIEU!”

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 146.



receive Arnold in her own little sitting-room. It proved to be a very brief interview. A quarter of an hour later, Arnold appeared before Sir Patrick—while the old gentleman was sunning himself in the garden—with a face of blank despair. Blanche had indignantly declined even to think of such a thing as her marriage, at a time when she was heart-broken by the discovery that Anne had left her forever.

“You gave me leave to mention it, Sir Patrick—didn’t you?” said Arnold.

Sir Patrick shifted round a little, so as to get the sun on his back, and admitted that he had given leave.

“If I had only known, I would rather have cut my tongue out than have said a word about it. What do you think she did? She burst out crying, and ordered me to leave the room.”

It was a lovely morning—a cool breeze tempered the heat of the sun; the birds were singing; the garden wore its brightest look. Sir Patrick was supremely comfortable. The little wearisome vexations of this mortal life had retired to a respectful distance from him. He positively declined to invite them to come any nearer.

“Here is a world,” said the old gentleman, getting the sun a little more broadly on his back, “which a merciful Creator has filled with lovely sights, harmonious sounds, delicious scents; and here are creatures with faculties expressly made for enjoyment of those sights, sounds and scents—to say nothing of Love, Dinner and Sleep, all

thrown into the bargain. And these same creatures hate, starve, toss sleepless on their pillows, see nothing pleasant, hear nothing pleasant, smell nothing pleasant—cry bitter tears, say hard words, contract painful illnesses; wither, sink, age, die! What does it mean, Arnold? And how much longer is it all to go on?"

The fine connecting link between the blindness of Blanche to the advantage of being married, and the blindness of humanity to the advantage of being in existence, though sufficiently perceptible, no doubt, to venerable Philosophy ripening in the sun, was absolutely invisible to Arnold. He deliberately dropped the vast question opened by Sir Patrick, and, reverting to Blanche, asked what was to be done.

"What do you do with a fire, when you can't extinguish it?" said Sir Patrick. "You let it blaze till it goes out. What do you do with a woman when you can't pacify her? Let *her* blaze till she goes out."

Arnold failed to see the wisdom embodied in that excellent advice. "I thought you would have helped me to put things right with Blanche," he said.

"I *am* helping you. Let Blanche alone. Don't speak of the marriage again, the next time you see her. If she mentions it, beg her pardon, and tell her you won't press the question any more. I shall see her in an hour or two, and I shall take exactly the same tone myself. You have put the idea into her mind—leave it there to ripen. Give her distress about Miss Silvester



nothing to feed on. Don't stimulate it by contradiction; don't rouse it to defend itself by disparagement of her lost friend. Leave Time to edge her gently nearer and nearer to the husband who is waiting for her—and take my word for it, Time will have her ready when the settlements are ready.”

Toward the luncheon hour Sir Patrick saw Blanche, and put in practice the principle which he had laid down. She was perfectly tranquil before her uncle left her. A little later, Arnold was forgiven. A little later still, the old gentleman's sharp observation noted that his niece was unusually thoughtful, and that she looked at Arnold, from time to time, with an interest of a new kind—an interest which shyly hid itself from Arnold's view. Sir Patrick went up to dress for dinner, with a comfortable inner conviction that the difficulties which had beset him were settled at last. Sir Patrick had never been more mistaken in his life.

The business of the toilet was far advanced. Duncan had just placed the glass in a good light; and Duncan's master was at that turning-point in his daily life which consisted in attaining or not attaining, absolute perfection in the tying of his white cravat—when some outer barbarian, ignorant of the first principles of dressing a gentleman's throat, presumed to knock at the bedroom door. Neither master nor servant moved or breathed until the integrity of the cravat was placed beyond the reach of accident. Then Sir Patrick cast the look of final criticism in the

glass, and breathed again when he saw that it was done.

"A little labored in style, Duncan. But not bad, considering the interruption?"

"By no means, Sir Patrick."

"See who it is."

Duncan went to the door, and returned to his master, with an excuse for the interruption, in the shape of a telegram!

Sir Patrick started at the sight of that unwelcome message. "Sign the receipt, Duncan," he said—and opened the envelope. Yes! Exactly as he had anticipated! News of Miss Silvester, on the very day when he had decided to abandon all further attempt at discovering her. The telegram ran thus:

"Message received from Falkirk this morning. Lady, as described, left the train at Falkirk last night. Went on, by the first train this morning, to Glasgow. Wait further instructions."

"Is the messenger to take anything back, Sir Patrick?"

"No. I must consider what I am to do. If I find it necessary, I will send to the station. Here is news of Miss Silvester, Duncan," continued Sir Patrick, when the messenger had gone. "She has been traced to Glasgow."

"Glasgow is a large place, Sir Patrick."

"Yes. Even if they have telegraphed on and had her watched (which doesn't appear), she may escape us again at Glasgow. I am the last man in the world, I hope, to shrink from accepting my fair share of any responsibility. But I

own I would have given something to have kept this telegram out of the house. It raises the most awkward question I have had to decide on for many a long day past. Help me on with my coat. I must think of it! I must think of it!"

Sir Patrick went down to dinner in no agreeable frame of mind. The unexpected recovery of the lost trace of Miss Silvester—there is no disguising it—seriously annoyed him.

The dinner-party that day, assembling punctually at the stroke of the bell, had to wait a quarter of an hour before the hostess came downstairs.

Lady Lundie's apology, when she entered the library, informed her guests that she had been detained by some neighbors who had called at an unusually late hour. Mr. and Mrs. Julius Delamayn, finding themselves near Windygates, had favored her with a visit, on their way home, and had left cards of invitation for a garden-party at their house.

Lady Lundie was charmed with her new acquaintances. They had included everybody who was staying at Windygates in their invitation. They had been as pleasant and easy as old friends. Mrs. Delamayn had brought the kindest message from one of her guests—Mrs. Glenarm—to say that she remembered meeting Lady Lundie in London, in the time of the late Sir Thomas, and was anxious to improve the acquaintance. Mr. Julius Delamayn had given a most amusing account of his brother. Geoffrey

had sent to London for a trainer; and the whole household was on the tiptoe of expectation to witness the magnificent spectacle of an athlete preparing himself for a foot-race. The ladies, with Mrs. Glenarm at their head, were hard at work, studying the profound and complicated question of human running—the muscles employed in it, the preparation required for it, the heroes eminent in it. The men had been all occupied that morning in assisting Geoffrey to measure a mile, for his exercising-ground, in a remote part of the park—where there was an empty cottage, which was to be fitted with all the necessary appliances for the reception of Geoffrey and his trainer. “You will see the last of my brother,” Julius had said, “at the garden-party. After that he retires into athletic privacy, and has but one interest in life—the interest of watching the disappearance of his own superfluous flesh.” Throughout the dinner Lady Lundie was in oppressively good spirits, singing the praises of her new friends. Sir Patrick, on the other hand, had never been so silent within the memory of mortal man. He talked with an effort; and he listened with a greater effort still. To answer or not to answer the telegram in his pocket? To persist or not to persist in his resolution to leave Miss Silvester to go her own way? Those were the questions which insisted on coming round to him as regularly as the dishes themselves came round in the orderly progression of the dinner.

Blanche—who had not felt equal to taking her

place at the table—appeared in the drawing-room afterward.

Sir Patrick came into tea with the gentlemen, still uncertain as to the right course to take in the matter of the telegram. One look at Blanche's sad face and Blanche's altered manner decided him. What would be the result if he roused new hopes by resuming the effort to trace Miss Silvester, and if he lost the trace a second time? He had only to look at his niece and to see. Could any consideration justify him in turning her mind back on the memory of the friend who had left her at the moment when it was just beginning to look forward for relief to the prospect of her marriage? Nothing could justify him; and nothing should induce him to do it.

Reasoning—soundly enough, from his own point of view—on that basis, Sir Patrick determined on sending no further instructions to his friend at Edinburgh. That night he warned Duncan to preserve the strictest silence as to the arrival of the telegram. He burned it, in case of accidents, with his own hand, in his own room.

Rising the next day and looking out of his window, Sir Patrick saw the two young people taking their morning walk at a moment when they happened to cross the open grassy space which separated the two shrubberies at Windygates. Arnold's arm was round Blanche's waist, and they were talking confidentially with their heads close together. "She is coming round already!" thought the old gentleman, as the two disappeared again in the second shrubbery from

view. "Thank Heaven! things are running smoothly at last!"

Among the ornaments of Sir Patrick's bedroom there was a view (taken from above) of one of the Highland water-falls. If he had looked at the picture when he turned away from his window, he might have remarked that a river which is running with its utmost smoothness at one moment may be a river which plunges into its most violent agitation at another; and he might have remembered, with certain misgivings, that the progress of a stream of water has been long since likened, with the universal consent of humanity, to the progress of the stream of life.

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### *FIFTH SCENE.—GLASGOW.*

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## CHAPTER THE TWENTY-NINTH.

### ANNE AMONG THE LAWYERS.

ON the day when Sir Patrick received the second of the two telegrams sent to him from Edinburgh, four respectable inhabitants of the City of Glasgow were startled by the appearance of an object of interest on the monotonous horizon of their daily lives,



The persons receiving this wholesome shock were—Mr. and Mrs. Carnegie of the Sheep's Head Hotel; and Mr. Camp and Mr. Crum, attached as "Writers" to the honorable profession of the Law.

It was still early in the day when a lady arrived in a cab from the railway, at the Sheep's Head Hotel. Her luggage consisted of a black box, and of a well-worn leather bag which she carried in her hand. The name on the box (recently written on a new luggage label, as the color of the ink and paper showed) was a very good name in its way, common to a very great number of ladies, both in Scotland and England. It was "Mrs. Graham."

Encountering the landlord at the entrance to the hotel, "Mrs. Graham" asked to be accommodated with a bedroom, and was transferred in due course to the chamber-maid on duty at the time. Returning to the little room behind the bar, in which the accounts were kept, Mr. Carnegie surprised his wife by moving more briskly and looking much brighter than usual. Being questioned, Mr. Carnegie (who had cast the eye of a landlord on the black box in the passage) announced that one "Mrs. Graham" had just arrived, and was then and there to be booked as inhabiting Room Number Seventeen. Being informed (with considerable asperity of tone and manner) that this answer failed to account for the interest which appeared to have been inspired in him by a total stranger, Mr. Carnegie came to the point, and confessed that "Mrs. Graham"



was one of the sweetest-looking women he had seen for many a long day, and that he feared she was very seriously out of health.

Upon that reply the eyes of Mrs. Carnegie developed in size, and the color of Mrs. Carnegie deepened in tint. She got up from her chair, and said that it might be just as well if she personally superintended the installation of "Mrs. Graham" in her room, and personally satisfied herself that "Mrs. Graham" was a fit inmate to be received at the Sheep's Head Hotel. Mr. Carnegie thereupon did what he always did—he agreed with his wife.

Mrs. Carnegie was absent for some little time. On her return her eyes had a certain tigerish cast in them when they rested on Mr. Carnegie. She ordered tea and some light refreshment to be taken to Number Seventeen. This done—without any visible provocation to account for the remark—she turned upon her husband, and said, "Mr. Carnegie, you are a fool." Mr. Carnegie asked "Why, my dear?" Mrs. Carnegie snapped her fingers, and said, "*That* for her good looks! You don't know a good-looking woman when you see her." Mr. Carnegie agreed with his wife.

Nothing more was said until the waiter appeared at the bar with his tray. Mrs. Carnegie, having first waived the tray off, without instituting her customary investigation, sat down suddenly with a thump, and said to her husband (who had not uttered a word in the interval), "Don't talk to Me about her being out of health!

*That* for her health! It's trouble on her mind." Mr. Carnegie said, "Is it now?" Mrs. Carnegie replied, "When I have said, It is, I consider myself insulted if another person says, Is it?" Mr. Carnegie agreed with his wife.

There was another interval. Mrs. Carnegie added up a bill, with a face of disgust. Mr. Carnegie looked at her with a face of wonder. Mrs. Carnegie suddenly asked him why he wasted his looks on *her*, when he would have "Mrs. Graham" to look at before long. Mr. Carnegie, upon that, attempted to compromise the matter, by looking, in the interim, at his own boots. Mrs. Carnegie wished to know whether, after twenty years of married life, she was considered to be not worth answering by her own husband. Treated with bare civility (she expected no more), she might have gone on to explain that "Mrs. Graham" was going out. She might also have been prevailed on to mention that "Mrs. Graham" had asked her a very remarkable question of a business nature, at the interview between them upstairs. As it was, Mrs. Carnegie's lips were sealed, and let Mr. Carnegie deny, if he dared, that he richly deserved it. Mr. Carnegie agreed with his wife.

In half an hour more "Mrs. Graham" came downstairs, and a cab was sent for. Mr. Carnegie, in fear of the consequences if he did otherwise, kept in a corner. Mrs. Carnegie followed him into the corner, and asked him how he dared act in that way? Did he presume to think, after twenty years of married life, that his wife was

jealous? Go, you brute, and hand Mrs. Graham into the cab!

Mr. Carnegie obeyed. He asked, at the cab window, to what part of Glasgow he should tell the driver to go. The reply informed him that the driver was to take "Mrs. Graham" to the office of Mr. Camp, the lawyer. Assuming "Mrs. Graham" to be a stranger in Glasgow, and remembering that Mr. Camp was Mr. Carnegie's lawyer, the inference appeared to be, that "Mrs. Graham's" remarkable question, addressed to the landlady, had related to legal business, and to the discovery of a trustworthy person capable of transacting it for her.

Returning to the bar, Mr. Carnegie found his eldest daughter in charge of the books, the bills, and the waiters. Mrs. Carnegie had retired to her own room, justly indignant with her husband for his infamous conduct in handing "Mrs. Graham" into the cab before her own eyes. "It's the old story, Pa," remarked Miss Carnegie, with the most perfect composure. "Ma told you to do it, of course; and then Ma says you've insulted her before all the servants. I wonder how you bear it?" Mr. Carnegie looked at his boots, and answered, "I wonder, too, my dear?" Miss Carnegie said, "You're not going to Ma, are you?" Mr. Carnegie looked up from his boots, and answered, "I must, my dear."

Mr. Camp sat in his private room, absorbed over his papers. Multitudinous as those documents were, they appeared to be not sufficiently

numerous to satisfy Mr. Camp. He rang his bell, and ordered more.

The clerk appearing with a new pile of papers, appeared also with a message. A lady, recommended by Mrs. Karnegie, of the Sheep's Head, wished to consult Mr. Camp professionally. Mr. Camp looked at his watch, counting out precious time before him, in a little stand on the table, and said, "Show the lady in, in ten minutes."

In ten minutes the lady appeared. She took the client's chair and lifted her veil. The same effect which had been produced on Mr. Karnegie was once more produced on Mr. Camp. For the first time, for many a long year past, he felt personally interested in a total stranger. It might have been something in her eyes, or it might have been something in her manner. Whatever it was it took softly hold of him, and made him, to his own exceeding surprise, unmistakably anxious to hear what she had to say!

The lady announced—in a low sweet voice, touched with a quiet sadness—that her business related to a question of marriage (as marriage is understood by Scottish law), and that her own peace of mind, and the happiness of a person very dear to her, were concerned alike in the opinion which Mr. Camp might give when he had been placed in possession of the facts.

She then proceeded to state the facts, without mentioning names: relating in every particular precisely the same succession of events which Geoffrey Delamayn had already related to Sir Patrick Lundie—with this one difference, that

she acknowledged herself to be the woman who was personally concerned in knowing whether, by Scottish law, she was now held to be a married woman or not.

Mr. Camp's opinion given upon this, after certain questions had been asked and answered, differed from Sir Patrick's opinion, as given at Windygates. He too quoted the language used by the eminent judge—Lord Deas—but he drew an inference of his own from it. "In Scotland, consent makes marriage," he said; "and consent may be proved by inference. I see a plain inference of matrimonial consent in the circumstances which you have related to me; and I say you are a married woman."

The effect produced on the lady, when sentence was pronounced on her in those terms, was so distressing that Mr. Camp sent a message upstairs to his wife; and Mrs. Camp appeared in her husband's private room, in business hours, for the first time in her life. When Mrs. Camp's services had in some degree restored the lady to herself, Mr. Camp followed with a word of professional comfort. He, like Sir Patrick, acknowledged the scandalous divergence of opinions produced by the confusion and uncertainty of the marriage-law of Scotland. He, like Sir Patrick, declared it to be quite possible that another lawyer might arrive at another conclusion. "Go," he said, giving her his card, with a line of writing on it, "to my colleague, Mr. Crum, and say I sent you."

The lady gratefully thanked Mr. Camp and

his wife, and went next to the office of Mr. Crum.

Mr. Crum was the older lawyer of the two, and the harder lawyer of the two; but he, too, felt the influence which the charm that there was in this woman exercised, more or less, over every man who came in contact with her. He listened with a patience which was rare with him; he put his questions with a gentleness which was rarer still; and when *he* was in possession of the circumstances—behold, *his* opinion flatly contradicted the opinion of Mr. Camp.

“No marriage, ma’am,” he said, positively. “Evidence in favor of perhaps establishing a marriage, if you propose to claim the man. But that, as I understand it, is exactly what you don’t wish to do.”

The relief to the lady, on hearing this, almost overpowered her. For some minutes she was unable to speak. Mr. Crum did, what he had never done yet in all his experience as a lawyer. He patted a client on the shoulder; and, more extraordinary still, he gave a client permission to waste his time. “Wait, and compose yourself,” said Mr. Crum—administering the law of humanity. The lady composed herself. “I must ask you some questions, ma’am,” said Mr. Crum—administering the law of the land. The lady bowed, and waited for him to begin.

“I know, thus far, that you decline to claim the gentleman,” said Mr. Crum. “I want to know now whether the gentleman is likely to claim *you*.”



The answer to this was given in the most positive terms. The gentleman was not even aware of the position in which he stood. And, more yet, he was engaged to be married to the dearest friend whom the lady had in the world.

Mr. Crum opened his eyes—considered—and put another question as delicately as he could:

“Would it be painful to you to tell me how the gentleman came to occupy the awkward position in which he stands now?”

The lady acknowledged that it would be indescribably painful to her to answer that question.

Mr. Crum offered a suggestion under the form of an inquiry:

“Would it be painful to you to reveal the circumstances—in the interests of the gentleman’s future prospects—to some discreet person (a legal person would be best) who is not, what I am, a stranger to you both?”

The lady declared herself willing to make any sacrifice on those conditions—no matter how painful it might be—for her friend’s sake.

Mr. Crum considered a little longer, and then delivered his word of advice:

“At the present stage of the affair,” he said, “I need only tell you what is the first step that you ought to take under the circumstances. Inform the gentleman at once—either by word of mouth or by writing—of the position in which he stands; and authorize him to place the case in the hands of a person known to you both, who is competent to decide on what you are to do



next. Do I understand that you know of such a person so qualified?"

The lady answered that she knew of such a person.

Mr. Crum asked if a day had been fixed for the gentleman's marriage.

The lady answered that she had made this inquiry herself on the last occasion when she had seen the gentleman's betrothed wife. The marriage was to take place, on a day to be hereafter chosen, at the end of the autumn.

"That," said Mr. Crum, "is a fortunate circumstance. You have time before you. Time is, here, of very great importance. Be careful not to waste it."

The lady said she would return to her hotel and write by that night's post, to warn the gentleman of the position in which he stood, and to authorize him to refer the matter to a competent and trustworthy friend known to them both.

On rising to leave the room she was seized with giddiness, and with some sudden pang of pain, which turned her deadly pale and forced her to drop back into her chair. Mr. Crum had no wife; but he possessed a housekeeper—and he offered to send for her. The lady made a sign in the negative. She drank a little water, and conquered the pain. "I am sorry to have alarmed you," she said. "It's nothing—I am better now." Mr. Crum gave her his arm and put her into the cab. She looked so pale and faint that he proposed sending his housekeeper with her. No: it was only five minutes' drive

to the hotel. The lady thanked him, and went her way back by herself.

"The letter!" she said, when she was alone. "If I can only live long enough to write the letter!"

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## CHAPTER THE THIRTIETH.

### ANNE IN THE NEWSPAPERS.

MRS. KARNEGIE was a woman of feeble intelligence and violent temper; prompt to take offense, and not, for the most part, easy to appease. But Mrs. Carnegie being—as we all are in our various degrees—a compound of many opposite qualities, possessed a character with more than one side to it, and had her human merits as well as her human faults. Seeds of sound good feeling were scattered away in the remoter corners of her nature, and only waited for the fertilizing occasion that was to help them to spring up. The occasion exerted that benign influence when the cab brought Mr. Crum's client back to the hotel. The face of the weary, heart-sick woman, as she slowly crossed the hall, roused all that was heartiest and best in Mrs. Carnegie's nature, and said to her, as if in words, "Jealous of this broken creature? Oh, wife and mother, is there no appeal to your common womanhood *here*?"

"I am afraid you have overtired yourself, ma'am. Let me send you something upstairs?"

"Send me pen, ink and paper," was the an-

swer. "I must write a letter. I must do it at once."

It was useless to remonstrate with her. She was ready to accept anything proposed, provided the writing materials were supplied first. Mrs. Carnegie sent them up, and then compounded a certain mixture of eggs and hot wine, for which The Sheep's Head was famous, with her own hands. In five minutes or so it was ready; and Miss Carnegie was dispatched by her mother (who had other business on hand at the time) to take it upstairs.

After the lapse of a few moments a cry of alarm was heard from the upper landing. Mrs. Carnegie recognized her daughter's voice, and hastened to the bedroom floor.

"Oh, mamma! Look at her! look at her!"

The letter was on the table with the first lines written. The woman was on the sofa with her handkerchief twisted between her set teeth, and her tortured face terrible to look at. Mrs. Carnegie raised her a little, examined her closely—then suddenly changed color, and sent her daughter out of the room with directions to dispatch a messenger instantly for medical help.

Left alone with the sufferer, Mrs. Carnegie carried her to her bed. As she was laid down her left hand fell helpless over the side of the bed. Mrs. Carnegie suddenly checked the word of sympathy as it rose to her lips—suddenly lifted the hand, and looked, with a momentary sternness of scrutiny, at the third finger. There was a ring on it. Mrs. Carnegie's face softened on

the instant: the word of pity that had been suspended the moment before passed her lips freely now. "Poor soul!" said the respectable landlady, taking appearances for granted. "Where's your husband, dear? Try and tell me."

The doctor made his appearance, and went up to the patient.

Time passed, and Mr. Karnegie and his daughter, carrying on the business of the hotel, received a message from upstairs which was ominous of something out of the common. The message gave the name and address of an experienced nurse—with the doctor's compliments, and would Mr. Karnegie have the kindness to send for her immediately.

The nurse was found and sent upstairs.

Time went on, and the business of the hotel went on, and it was getting to be late in the evening, when Mrs. Karnegie appeared at last in the parlor behind the bar. The landlady's face was grave; the landlady's manner was subdued. "Very, very ill," was the only reply she made to her daughter's inquiries. When she and her husband were together, a little later, she told the news from upstairs in greater detail. "A child born dead," said Mrs. Karnegie, in gentler tones than were customary with her. "And the mother dying, poor thing, so far as *I* can see."

A little later the doctor came down. Dead? No.—Likely to live? Impossible to say. The doctor returned twice in the course of the night. Both times he had but one answer. "Wait till to-morrow."

The next day came. She rallied a little. Toward the afternoon she began to speak. She expressed no surprise at seeing strangers by her bedside: her mind wandered. She passed again into insensibility. Then back to delirium once more. The doctor said, "This may last for weeks. Or it may end suddenly in death. It's time you did something toward finding her friends."

(Her friends! She had left the one friend she had forever!)

Mr. Camp was summoned to give his advice. The first thing he asked for was the unfinished letter.

It was blotted, it was illegible in more places than one. With pains and care they made out the address at the beginning, and here and there some fragments of the lines that followed. It began: "Dear Mr. Brinkworth." Then the writing got, little by little, worse and worse. To the eyes of the strangers who looked at it, it ran thus: "I should ill requite . . . Blanche's interests . . . For God's sake! . . . don't think of *me* . . .—" There was a little more, but not so much as one word, in those last lines, was legible.

The names mentioned in the letter were reported by the doctor and the nurse to be also the names on her lips when she spoke in her wanderings. "Mr. Brinkworth" and "Blanche"—her mind ran incessantly on those two persons. The one intelligible thing that she mentioned in connection with them was the letter. She was per-

petually trying, trying, trying to take that unfinished letter to the post; and she could never get there. Sometimes the post was across the sea. Sometimes it was at the top of an inaccessible mountain. Sometimes it was built in by prodigious walls all round it. Sometimes a man stopped her cruelly at the moment when she was close at the post, and forced her back thousands of miles away from it. She once or twice mentioned this visionary man by his name. They made it out to be "Geoffrey."

Finding no clew to her identity either in the letter that she had tried to write or in the wild words that escaped her from time to time, it was decided to search her luggage, and to look at the clothes which she had worn when she arrived at the hotel.

Her black box sufficiently proclaimed itself as recently purchased. On opening it the address of a Glasgow trunk-maker was discovered inside. The linen was also new, and unmarked. The receipted shop-bill was found with it. The tradesmen, sent for in each case and questioned, referred to their books. It was proved that the box and the linen had both been purchased on the day when she appeared at the hotel.

Her black bag was opened next. A sum of between eighty and ninety pounds in Bank of England notes; a few simple articles belonging to the toilet; materials for needle-work; and a photographic portrait of a young lady, inscribed, "To Anne, from Blanche," were found in the bag—but no letters, and nothing whatever that



could afford the slightest clew by which the owner could be traced. The pocket in her dress was searched next. It contained a purse, an empty card-case, and a new handkerchief unmarked.

Mr. Camp shook his head.

"A woman's luggage without any letters in it," he said, "suggests to my mind a woman who has a motive of her own for keeping her movements a secret. I suspect she has destroyed her letters, and emptied her card-case, with that view." Mrs. Carnegie's report, after examining the linen which the so-called "Mrs. Graham" had worn when she arrived at the inn, proved the soundness of the lawyer's opinion. In every case the marks had been cut out. Mrs. Carnegie began to doubt whether the ring which she had seen on the third finger of the lady's left hand had been placed there with the sanction of the law.

There was but one chance left of discovering—or rather of attempting to discover—her friends. Mr. Camp drew out an advertisement to be inserted in the Glasgow newspapers. If those newspapers happened to be seen by any member of her family, she would, in all probability, be claimed. In the contrary event there would be nothing for it but to wait for her recovery or her death—with the money belonging to her sealed up, and deposited in the landlord's strong-box.

The advertisement appeared. They waited for three days afterward and nothing came of it. No change of importance occurred, during the



same period, in the condition of the suffering woman. Mr. Camp looked in, toward evening, and said, "We have done our best. There is no help for it but to wait."

Far away in Perthshire that third evening was marked as a joyful occasion at Windygates House. Blanche had consented at last to listen to Arnold's entreaties, and had sanctioned the writing of a letter to London to order her wedding-dress.

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## *SIXTH SCENE—SWANHAVEN LODGE.*

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### CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIRST.

#### SEEDS OF THE FUTURE (FIRST SOWING).

"NOT so large as Windygates. But—shall we say snug, Jones?"

"And comfortable, Smith. I quite agree with you."

Such was the judgment pronounced by the two choral gentlemen on Julius Delamayn's house in Scotland. It was, as usual with Smith and Jones, a sound judgment—as far as it went. Swanhaven Lodge was not half the size of Windygates; but it had been inhabited for two

centuries when the foundations of Windygates were first laid—and it possessed the advantages, without inheriting the drawbacks, of its age. There is in an old house a friendly adaptation to the human character, as there is in an old hat a friendly adaptation to the human head. The visitor who left Swanhaven quitted it with something like a sense of leaving home. Among the few houses not our own which take a strong hold on our sympathies this was one. The ornamental grounds were far inferior in size and splendor to the grounds at Windygates. But the park was beautiful—less carefully laid out, but also less monotonous than an English park. The lake on the northern boundary of the estate, famous for its breed of swans, was one of the curiosities of the neighborhood; and the house had a history, associating it with more than one celebrated Scottish name, which had been written and illustrated by Julius Delamayn. Visitors to Swanhaven Lodge were invariably presented with a copy of the volume (privately printed). One in twenty read it. The rest were “charmed,” and looked at the pictures.

The day was the last day of August, and the occasion was the garden-party given by Mr. and Mrs. Delamayn.

Smith and Jones—following, with the other guests at Windygates, in Lady Lundie’s train—exchanged their opinions on the merits of the house, standing on a terrace at the back, near a flight of steps which led down into the garden. They formed the vanguard of the visitors, ap-

pearing by twos and threes from the reception rooms, and all bent on going to see the swans before the amusements of the day began. Julius Delamayn came out with the first detachment, recruited Smith and Jones, and other wandering bachelors, by-the-way, and set forth for the lake. An interval of a minute or two passed—and the terrace remained empty. Then two ladies—at the head of a second detachment of visitors—appeared under the old stone porch which sheltered the entrance on that side of the house. One of the ladies was a modest, pleasant little person, very simply dressed. The other was of the tall and formidable type of “fine women,” clad in dazzling array. The first was Mrs. Julius Delamayn. The second was Lady Lundie.

“Exquisite!” cried her ladyship, surveying the old mullioned widows of the house, with their framing of creepers, and the grand stone buttresses projecting at intervals from the wall, each with its bright little circle of flowers blooming round the base. “I am really grieved that Sir Patrick should have missed this.”

“I think you said, Lady Lundie, that Sir Patrick had been called to Edinburgh by family business?”

“Business, Mrs. Delamayn, which is anything but agreeable to me, as one member of the family. It has altered all my arrangements for the autumn. My stepdaughter is to be married next week.”

“Is it so near as that? May I ask who the gentleman is?”

“Mr. Arnold Brinkworth.”

“Surely I have some association with that name?”

“You have probably heard of him, Mrs. Delamayn, as the heir to Miss Brinkworth’s Scotch property?”

“Exactly! Have you brought Mr. Brinkworth here to-day?”

“I bring his apologies, as well as Sir Patrick’s. They went to Edinburgh together the day before yesterday. The lawyers engage to have the settlements ready in three or four days more, if a personal consultation can be managed. Some formal question, I believe, connected with title-deeds. Sir Patrick thought the safest way and the speediest way would be to take Mr. Brinkworth with him to Edinburgh—to get the business over to-day—and to wait until we join them, on our way south, to-morrow.”

“You leave Windygates, in this lovely weather?”

“Most unwillingly! The truth is, Mrs. Delamayn, I am at my stepdaughter’s mercy. Her uncle has the authority, as her guardian—and the use he makes of it is to give her her own way in everything. It was only on Friday last that she consented to let the day be fixed—and even then she made it a positive condition that the marriage was not to take place in Scotland. Pure willfulness! But what can I do? Sir Patrick submits; and Mr. Brinkworth submits. If I am to be present at the marriage I must follow their example. I feel it my duty to be present—

and, as a matter of course, I sacrifice myself. We start for London to-morrow."

"Is Miss Lundie to be married in London at this time of year?"

"No. We only pass through, on our way to Sir Patrick's place in Kent—the place that came to him with the title; the place associated with the last days of my beloved husband. Another trial for *me*! The marriage is to be solemnized on the scene of my bereavement. My old wound is to be re-opened on Monday next—simply because my stepdaughter has taken a dislike to Windygates."

"This day week, then, is the day of the marriage?"

"Yes; this day week. There have been reasons for hurrying it which I need not trouble you with. No words can say how I wish it was over. —But, my dear Mrs. Delamayn, how thoughtless of me to assail *you* with my family worries! You are so sympathetic. That is my only excuse. Don't let me keep you from your guests. I could linger in this sweet place forever! Where is Mrs. Glenarm?"

"I really don't know. I missed her when we came out on the terrace. She will very likely join us at the lake. Do you care about seeing the lake, Lady Lundie?"

"I adore the beauties of Nature, Mrs. Delamayn—especially lakes!"

"We have something to show you besides; we have a breed of swans on the lake, peculiar to the place. My husband has gone on with some

of our friends; and I believe we are expected to follow, as soon as the rest of the party—in charge of my sister—have seen the house.’”

“And what a house, Mrs. Delamayn! Historical associations in every corner of it! It is *such* a relief to my mind to take refuge in the past. When I am far away from this sweet place I shall people Swanhaven with its departed inmates, and share the joys and sorrows of centuries since.”

As Lady Lundie announced, in these terms, her intention of adding to the population of the past, the last of the guests who had been roaming over the old house appeared under the porch. Among the members forming this final addition to the garden-party were Blanche, and a friend of her own age whom she had met at Swanhaven. The two girls lagged behind the rest, talking confidentially, arm in arm—the subject (it is surely needless to add?) being the coming marriage.

“But, dearest Blanche, why are you not to be married at Windygates?”

“I detest Windygates, Janet. I have the most miserable associations with the place. Don’t ask me what they are! The effort of my life is not to think of them now. I long to see the last of Windygates. As for being married there, I have made it a condition that I am not to be married in Scotland at all.”

“What has poor Scotland done to forfeit your good opinion, my dear?”

“Poor Scotland, Janet, is a place where people don’t know whether they are married or not. I

have heard all about it from my uncle. And I know somebody who has been a victim—an innocent victim—to a Scotch marriage.”

“Absurd, Blanche! You are thinking of run-away matches and making Scotland responsible for the difficulties of people who daren’t own the truth!”

“I am not at all absurd. I am thinking of the dearest friend I have. If you only knew—”

“My dear! I am Scotch, remember! You can be married just as well—I really must insist on that—in Scotland as in England.”

“I hate Scotland!”

“Blanche!”

“I never was so unhappy in my life as I have been in Scotland. I never want to see it again. I am determined to be married in England—from the dear old house where I used to live when I was a little girl. My uncle is quite willing. *He* understands me and feels for me.”

“Is that as much as to say that *I* don’t understand you and feel for you? Perhaps I had better relieve you of my company, Blanche?”

“If you are going to speak to me in that way, perhaps you had!”

“Am I to hear my native country run down and not say a word in defense of it?”

“Oh! you Scotch people make such a fuss about your native country!”

“*We* Scotch people! you are of Scotch extraction yourself, and you ought to be ashamed to talk in that way. I wish you good-morning!”

“I wish you a better temper!”



A minute since the two young ladies had been like twin roses on one stalk. Now they parted with red cheeks and hostile sentiments and cutting words. How ardent is the warmth of youth! how unspeakably delicate the fragility of female friendship!

The flock of visitors followed Mrs. Delamayn to the shores of the lake. For a few minutes after the terrace was left a solitude. Then there apperaed under the porch a single gentleman, lounging out with a flower in his mouth and his hands in his pockets. This was the strongest man at Swanhaven—otherwise, Geoffrey Delamayn.

After a moment a lady appeared behind him, walking softly, so as not to be heard. She was superbly dressed after the newest and the most costly Parisian design. The brooch on her bosom was a single diamond of resplendent water and great size. The fan in her hand was a masterpiece of the finest Indian workmanship. She looked what she was, a person possessed of plenty of superfluous money, but not additionally blessed with plenty of superfluous intelligence to correspond. This was the childless young widow of the great iron-master—otherwise, Mrs. Glenarm.

The rich woman tapped the strong man coquettishly on the shoulder with her fan. “Ah! you bad boy!” she said, with a slightly-labored archness of look and manner. “Have I found you at last!”

Geoffrey sauntered on to the terrace—keeping

the lady behind him with a thoroughly savage superiority to all civilized submission to the sex—and looked at his watch.

“I said I’d come here when I’d got half an hour to myself,” he mumbled, turning the flower carelessly between his teeth. “I’ve got half an hour, and here I am.”

“Did you come for the sake of seeing the visitors, or did you come for the sake of seeing Me?”

Geoffrey smiled graciously, and gave the flower another turn in his teeth. “You, of course.”

The iron-master’s widow took his arm, and looked up at him—as only a young woman would have dared to look up—with the searching summer light streaming in its full brilliancy on her face.

Reduced to the plain expression of what it is really worth, the average English idea of beauty in women may be summed up in three words—youth, health, plumpness. The more spiritual charm of intelligence and vivacity, the subtler attraction of delicacy of line and fitness of detail, are little looked for and seldom appreciated by the mass of men in this island. It is impossible otherwise to account for the extraordinary blindness of perception which (to give one instance only) makes nine Englishmen out of ten who visit France come back declaring that they have not seen a single pretty Frenchwoman, in or out of Paris, in the whole country. Our popular type of beauty proclaims itself, in its fullest material

development, at every shop in which an illustrated periodical is sold. The same fleshy-faced girl, with the same inane smile, and with no other expression whatever, appears under every form of illustration, week after week, and month after month, all the year round. Those who wish to know what Mrs. Glenarm was like, have only to go out and stop at any bookseller's or news-vender's shop, and there they will see her in the first illustration, with a young woman in it, which they discover in the window. The one noticeable peculiarity in Mrs. Glenarm's purely commonplace and purely material beauty, which would have struck an observant and a cultivated man, was the curious girlishness of her look and manner. No stranger speaking to this woman—who had been a wife at twenty, and who was now a widow at twenty-four—would ever have thought of addressing her otherwise than as “Miss.”

“Is that the use you make of a flower when I give it to you?” she said to Geoffrey. “Mumbling it in your teeth, you wretch, as if you were a horse!”

“If you come to that,” returned Geoffrey, “I’m more a horse than a man. I’m going to run in a race, and the public are betting on me. Haw! haw! Five to four.”

“Five to four! I believe he thinks of nothing but betting. You great heavy creature, I can’t move you. Don’t you see I want to go like the rest of them to the lake? No; you’re not to let go of my arm! You’re to take me.”

"Can't do it. Must be back with Perry in half an hour."

(Perry was the trainer from London. He had arrived sooner than he had been expected, and had entered on his functions three days since.)

"Don't talk to me about Perry! A little vulgar wretch. Put him off. You won't? Do you mean to say you are such a brute that you would rather be with Perry than be with me?"

"The betting's at five to four, my dear. And the race comes off in a month from this."

"Oh! go away to your beloved Perry! I hate you. I hope you'll lose the race. Stop in your cottage. Pray don't come back to the house. And—mind this!—don't presume to say 'my dear' to me again."

"It ain't presuming half far enough, is it? Wait a bit. Give me till the race is run—and then I'll presume to marry you."

"You! You will be as old as Methuselah, if you wait till I am your wife. I dare say Perry has got a sister. Suppose you ask him? She would be just the right person for you."

Geoffrey gave the flower another turn in his teeth, and looked as if he thought the idea worth considering.

"All right," he said. "Anything to be agreeable to you. I'll ask Perry."

He turned away, as if he was going to do it at once. Mrs. Glenarm put out a little hand, ravishingly clothed in a blush-colored glove, and laid it on the athlete's mighty arm. She pinched those iron muscles (the pride and glory of En-

gland) gently. "What a man you are!" she said. "I never met with anybody like you before!"

The whole secret of the power that Geoffrey had acquired over her was in those words.

They had been together at Swanhaven for little more than ten days; and in that time he had made the conquest of Mrs. Glenarm. On the day before the garden-party—in one of the leisure intervals allowed him by Perry—he had caught her alone, had taken her by the arm, and had asked her, in so many words, if she would marry him. Instances on record of women who have been wooed and won in ten days are—to speak it with all possible respect—not wanting. But an instance of a woman willing to have it known still remains to be discovered. The iron-master's widow exacted a promise of secrecy before she committed herself. When Geoffrey had pledged his word to hold his tongue in public until she gave him leave to speak, Mrs. Glenarm, without further hesitation, said Yes—having, be it observed, said No, in the course of the last two years, to at least half a dozen men who were Geoffrey's superiors in every conceivable respect, except personal comeliness and personal strength.

There is a reason for everything; and there was a reason for this.

However persistently the epicene theorists of modern times may deny it, it is nevertheless a truth plainly visible in the whole past history of the sexes that the natural condition of a woman

is to find her master in a man. Look in the face of any woman who is in no direct way dependent on a man; and, as certainly as you see the sun in a cloudless sky, you see a woman who is not happy. The want of a master is their great unknown want; the possession of a master is—unconsciously to themselves—the only possible completion of their lives. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred this one primitive instinct is at the bottom of the otherwise inexplicable sacrifice, when we see a woman, of her own free-will, throw herself away on a man who is unworthy of her. This one primitive instinct was at the bottom of the otherwise inexplicable facility of self-surrender exhibited by Mrs. Glenarm.

Up to the time of her meeting with Geoffrey, the young widow had gathered but one experience in her intercourse with the world—the experience of a chartered tyrant. In the brief six months of her married life with the man whose granddaughter she might have been—and ought to have been—she had only to lift her finger to be obeyed. The doting old husband was the willing slave of the petulant young wife's slightest caprice. At a later period, when society offered its triple welcome to her birth, her beauty and her wealth—go where she might, she found herself the object of the same prostrate admiration among the suitors who vied with each other in the rivalry for her hand. For the first time in her life she encountered a man with a will of his own when she met Geoffrey Delamayn at Swanhaven Lodge.



Geoffrey's occupation of the moment especially favored the conflict between the woman's assertion of her influence and the man's assertion of his will.

During the days that had intervened between his return to his brother's house and the arrival of the trainer, Geoffrey had submitted himself to all needful preliminaries of the physical discipline which was to prepare him for the race. He knew, by previous experience, what exercise he ought to take, what hours he ought to keep, what temptations at the table he was bound to resist. Over and over again Mrs. Glenarm tried to lure him into committing infractions of his own discipline—and over and over again the influence with men which had never failed her before failed her now. Nothing she could say, nothing she could do, would move *this* man. Perry arrived; and Geoffrey's defiance of every attempted exercise of the charming feminine tyranny, to which every one else had bowed, grew more outrageous and more immovable than ever. Mrs. Glenarm became as jealous of Perry as if Perry had been a woman. She flew into passions; she burst into tears; she flirted with other men; she threatened to leave the house. All quite useless; Geoffrey never once missed an appointment with Perry; never once touched anything to eat or drink that she could offer him, if Perry had forbidden it. No other human pursuit is so hostile to the influence of the sex as the pursuit of athletic sports. No men are so entirely beyond the reach of women as the men whose



lives are passed in the cultivation of their own physical strength. Geoffrey resisted Mrs. Glenarm without the slightest effort. He casually extorted her admiration and undesignedly forced her respect. She clung to him, as a hero; she recoiled from him, as a brute; she struggled with him, submitted to him, despised him, adored him, in a breath. And the clew to it all, confused and contradictory as it seemed, lay in one simple fact—Mrs. Glenarm had found her master.

“Take me to the lake, Geoffrey!” she said, with a little pleading pressure of the blush-colored hand.

Geoffrey looked at his watch. “Perry expects me in twenty minutes,” he said.

“Perry again!”

“Yes.”

Mrs. Glenarm raised her fan, in a sudden outburst of fury, and broke it with one smart blow on Geoffrey’s face.

“There!” she cried, with a stamp of her foot. “My poor fan broken! You monster, all through you!”

Geoffrey coolly took the broken fan and put it in his pocket. “I’ll write to London,” he said, “and get you another. Come along! Kiss, and make it up.”

He looked over each shoulder to make sure that they were alone; then lifted her off the ground (she was no light weight), held her up in the air like a baby, and gave her a rough, loud-sounding kiss on each cheek. “With kind

compliments from yours truly!" he said—and burst out laughing, and put her down again.

"How dare you do that?" cried Mrs. Glenarm. "I shall claim Mrs. Delamayn's protection if I am to be insulted in this way! I will never forgive you, sir!" As she said those indignant words she shot a look at him which flatly contradicted them. The next moment she was leaning on his arm, and was looking at him wonderingly, for the thousandth time, as an entire novelty in her experience of male humankind. "How rough you are, Geoffrey!" she said, softly. He smiled in recognition of that artless homage to the manly virtue of his character. She saw the smile, and instantly made another effort to dispute the hateful supremacy of Perry. "Put him off!" whispered the daughter of Eve, determined to lure Adam into taking a bite of the apple. "Come, Geoffrey, dear, never mind Perry, this once. Take me to the lake!"

Geoffrey looked at his watch. "Perry expects me in a quarter of an hour," he said.

Mrs. Glenarm's indignation assumed a new form. She burst out crying. Geoffrey surveyed her for a moment with a broad stare of surprise—and then took her by both arms, and shook her.

"Look here!" he said, impatiently. "Can you coach me through my training?"

"I would if I could!"

"That's nothing to do with it! Can you turn me out, fit, on the day of the race? Yes? or No?"

"No."

"Then dry your eyes, and let Perry do it."

Mrs. Glenarm dried her eyes, and made another effort.

"I'm not fit to be seen," she said. "I'm so agitated, I don't know what to do. Come indoors, Geoffrey—and have a cup of tea."

Geoffrey shook his head. "Perry forbids tea," he said, "in the middle of the day."

"You brute!" cried Mrs. Glenarm.

"Do you want me to lose the race?" retorted Geoffrey.

"Yes!"

With that answer she left him at last, and ran back into the house.

Geoffrey took a turn on the terrace—considered a little—stopped—and looked at the porch under which the irate widow had disappeared from his view. "Ten thousand a year," he said, thinking of the matrimonial prospect which he was placing in peril. "And devilish well earned," he added, going into the house, under protest, to appease Mrs. Glenarm.

The offended lady was on a sofa, in the solitary drawing-room. Geoffrey sat down by her. She declined to look at him. "Don't be a fool!" said Geoffrey, in his most persuasive manner. Mrs. Glenarm put her handkerchief to her eyes. Geoffrey took it away again without ceremony. Mrs. Glenarm rose to leave the room. Geoffrey stopped her by main force. Mrs. Glenarm threatened to summon the servants. Geoffrey said, "All right! I don't care if the whole house knows I'm fond of you!" Mrs. Glenarm looked



"YOU'RE JUST THE SORT OF WOMAN I LIKE."

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 487.



at the door, and whispered, "Hush! for Heaven's sake!" Geoffrey put her arm in his, and said, "Come along with me: I've got something to say to you." Mrs. Glenarm drew back, and shook her head. Geoffrey put his arm around her waist, and walked her out of the room, and out of the house—taking the direction, not of the terrace, but of a fir plantation on the opposite side of the grounds. Arrived among the trees, he stopped and held up a warning forefinger before the offended lady's face. "You're just the sort of woman I like," he said; "and there ain't a man living who's half as sweet on you as I am. You leave off bullying me about Perry, and I'll tell you what I'll do—I'll let you see me take a Sprint."

He drew back a step, and fixed his big blue eyes on her, with a look which said, "You are a highly-favored woman, if ever there was one yet!" Curiosity instantly took the leading place among the emotions of Mrs. Glenarm. "What's a Sprint, Geoffrey?" she asked.

"A short run, to try me at the top of my speed. There ain't another living soul in all England that I'd let see it but you. *Now* am I a brute?"

Mrs. Glenarm was conquered again, for the hundredth time at least. She said, softly, "Oh, Geoffrey, if you could only be always like this!" Her eyes lifted themselves admiringly to his; she took his arm of her own accord, and pressed it with a loving clasp. Geoffrey prophetically felt the ten thousand a year in his pocket. "Do you really love me?" whispered Mrs. Glenarm.

"Don't I!" answered the hero. The peace was made, and the two walked on again.

They passed through the plantation, and came out on some open ground, rising and falling prettily, in little hillocks and hollows. The last of the hillocks sloped down into a smooth, level plain, with a fringe of sheltering trees on its further side—with a snug little stone cottage among the trees—and with a smart little man, walking up and down before the cottage, holding his hands behind him. The level plain was the hero's exercising ground; the cottage was the hero's retreat; and the smart little man was the hero's trainer.

If Mrs. Glenarm hated Perry, Perry (judging by appearances) was in no danger of loving Mrs. Glenarm. As Geoffrey approached with his companion, the trainer came to a stand-still and stared silently at the lady. The lady, on her side, declined to observe that any such person as the trainer was then in existence, and present in bodily form on the scene.

"How about time?" said Geoffrey.

Perry consulted an elaborate watch, constructed to mark time to the fifth of a second, and answered Geoffrey, with his eye all the while on Mrs. Glenarm.

"You've got five minutes to spare."

"Show me where you run; I'm dying to see it!" said the eager widow, taking possession of Geoffrey's arm with both hands.

Geoffrey led her back to a place (marked by a sapling with a little flag attached to it) at some



short distance from the cottage. She glided along by his side, with subtle undulations of movement which appeared to complete the exasperation of Perry. He waited until she was out of hearing—and then he invoked (let us say) the blasts of heaven on the fashionably-dressed head of Mrs. Glenarm.

“You take your place there,” said Geoffrey, posting her by the sapling. “When I pass you—” He stopped, and surveyed her with a good-humored, masculine pity. “How the devil am I to make you understand it?” he went on. “Look here! when I pass you it will be at what you would call (if I was a horse) full gallop. Hold your tongue—I haven’t done yet. You’re to look on after me as I leave you, to where the edge of the cottage wall cuts the trees. When you have lost sight of me behind the wall, you’ll have seen me run my three hundred yards from this flag. You’re in luck’s way! Perry tries me at the long Sprint to-day. You understand you’re to stop here? Very well then—let me go and get my toggery on.”

“Shan’t I see you again, Geoffrey?”

“Haven’t I just told you that you’ll see me run?”

“Yes—but after that?”

“After that, I’m sponged and rubbed down—and rest in the cottage.”

“You’ll come to us this evening?”

He nodded and left her. The face of Perry looked unutterable things when he and Geoffrey met at the door of the cottage.

"I've got a question to ask you, Mr. Delamayn," said the trainer. "Do you want me? or don't you?"

"Of course I want you."

"What did I say when I first come here?" proceeded Perry, sternly. "I said 'I won't have nobody a-looking on at a man I'm training. These here ladies and gentlemen may all have made up their minds to see you. I've made up *my* mind not to have no lookers-on. I won't have you timed at your work by nobody but me. I won't have every blessed yard of ground you cover put in the noospapers. I won't have a living soul in the secret of what you can do, and what you can't, except our two selves.'—Did I say that, Mr. Delamayn? or didn't I?"

"All right!"

"Did I say it? or didn't I?"

"Of course you did!"

"Then don't you bring no more women here. It's clean against rules. And I won't have it."

Any other living creature adopting this tone of remonstrance would probably have had reason to repent it. But Geoffrey himself was afraid to show his temper in the presence of Perry. In view of the coming race, the first and foremost of British trainers was not to be trifled with, even by the first and foremost of British athletes.

"She won't come again," said Geoffrey. "She's going away from Swanhaven in two days' time."

"I've put every shilling I'm worth in the world on you," pursued Perry, relapsing into

tenderness. "And I tell you I felt it! It cut me to the heart when I see you coming along with a woman at your heels. It's a fraud on his backers, I says to myself—that's what it is, a fraud on his backers!"

"Shut up!" said Geoffrey. "And come and help me to win your money." He kicked open the door of the cottage—and athlete and trainer disappeared from view.

After waiting a few minutes by the little flag, Mrs. Glenarm saw the two men approaching her from the cottage. Dressed in a close-fitting costume, light and elastic, adapting itself to every movement, and made to answer every purpose required by the exercise in which he was about to engage, Geoffrey's physical advantages showed themselves in their best and bravest aspect. His head sat proud and easy on his firm white throat, bared to the air. The rising of his mighty chest, as he drew in deep draughts of the fragrant summer breeze; the play of his lithe and supple loins; the easy, elastic stride of his straight and shapely legs, presented a triumph of physical manhood in its highest type. Mrs. Glenarm's eyes devoured him in silent admiration. He looked like a young god of mythology—like a statue animated with color and life. "Oh, Geoffrey!" she exclaimed, softly, as he went by. He neither answered nor looked: he had other business on hand than listening to soft nonsense. He was gathering himself up for the effort; his lips were set; his fists were lightly clinched. Perry posted himself at his place,

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grim and silent, with the watch in his hand. Geoffrey walked on beyond the flag, so as to give himself start enough to reach his full speed as he passed it. "Now then!" said Perry. In an instant more he flew by (to Mrs. Glenarm's excited imagination) like an arrow from a bow. His action was perfect. His speed, at its utmost rate of exertion, preserved its rare underlying elements of strength and steadiness. Less and less and less he grew to the eyes that followed his course; still lightly flying over the ground, still firmly keeping the straight line. A moment more, and the runner vanished behind the wall of the cottage, and the stop-watch of the trainer returned to its place in his pocket.

In her eagerness to know the result, Mrs. Glenarm forgot her jealousy of Perry.

"How long has he been?" she asked.

"There's a good many besides you would be glad to know that," said Perry.

"Mr. Delamayn will tell me, you rude man!"

"That depends, ma'am, on whether *I* tell *him*."

With this reply, Perry hurried back to the cottage.

Not a word passed while the trainer was attending to his man, and while the man was recovering his breath. When Geoffrey had been carefully rubbed down, and clothed again in his ordinary garments, Perry pulled a comfortable easy-chair out of a corner. Geoffrey fell into the chair, rather than sat down in it. Perry started, and looked at him attentively.

"Well?" said Geoffrey. "How about the time? Long? short? or middling?"

"Very good time," said Perry.

"How long?"

"When did you say the lady was going, Mr. Delamayn?"

"In two days."

"Very well, sir. I'll tell you 'how long' when the lady's gone."

Geoffrey made no attempt to insist on an immediate reply. He smiled faintly. After an interval of less than ten minutes he stretched out his legs and closed his eyes.

"Going to sleep?" said Perry.

Geoffrey opened his eyes with an effort. "No," he said. The word had hardly passed his lips before his eyes closed again.

"Halloo!" said Perry, watching him. "I don't like that."

He went closer to the chair. There was no doubt about it. The man was asleep.

Perry emitted a long whistle under his breath. He stooped and laid two of his fingers softly on Geoffrey's pulse. The beat was slow, heavy and labored. It was unmistakably the pulse of an exhausted man.

The trainer changed color and took a turn in the room. He opened a cupboard, and produced from it his diary of the preceding year. The entries relating to the last occasion on which he had prepared Geoffrey for a foot-race included the fullest details. He turned to the report of the first trial, at three hundred yards, full speed.

The time was, by one or two seconds, not so good as the time on this occasion. But the result, afterward, was utterly different. There it was, in Perry's own words: "Pulse good. Man in high spirits. Ready, if I would have let him, to run it over again."

Perry looked round at the same man, a year afterward—utterly worn out, and fast asleep in the chair.

He fetched pen, ink and paper out of the cupboard, and wrote two letters—both marked "Private." The first was to a medical man, a great authority among trainers. The second was to Perry's own agent in London, whom he knew he could trust. The letter pledged the agent to the strictest secrecy, and directed him to back Geoffrey's opponent in the Foot-race for a sum equal to the sum which Perry had betted on Geoffrey himself. "If you have got any money of your own on him," the letter concluded, "do as I do. 'Hedge'—and hold your tongue."

"Another of 'em gone stale!" said the trainer, looking round again at the sleeping man. "He'll lose the race."

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## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SECOND.

### SEEDS OF THE FUTURE (SECOND SOWING).

AND what did the visitors say of the Swans? They said, "Oh, what a number of them!"—

which was all that was to be said by persons ignorant of the natural history of aquatic birds.

And what did the visitors say of the lake?

Some of them said, "How solemn!" Some of them said, "How romantic!" Some of them said nothing—but privately thought it a dismal scene.

Here again the popular sentiment struck the right note at starting. The lake was hidden in the center of a fir-wood. Except in the middle, where the sunlight reached them, the waters lay black under the somber shadow of the trees. The one break in the plantation was at the further end of the lake. The one sign of movement and life to be seen was the ghostly gliding of the swans on the dead-still surface of the water. It was solemn—as they said; it was romantic—as they said. It was dismal—as they thought. Pages of description could express no more. Let pages of description be absent, therefore, in this place.

Having satiated itself with the swans, having exhausted the lake, the general curiosity reverted to the break in the trees at the further end—remarked a startlingly artificial object, intruding itself on the scene, in the shape of a large red curtain, which hung between two of the tallest firs, and closed the prospect beyond from view—requested an explanation of the curtain from Julius Delamayn—and received for answer that the mystery should be revealed on the arrival of his wife with the tardy remainder of the guests who had loitered about the house.



On the appearance of Mrs. Delamayn and the stragglers, the united party coasted the shore of the lake, and stood assembled in front of the curtain. Pointing to the silken cords hanging at either side of it, Julius Delamayn picked out two little girls (children of his wife's sister), and sent them to the cords, with instructions to pull, and see what happened. The nieces of Julius pulled with the eager hands of children in the presence of a mystery—the curtains parted in the middle, and a cry of universal astonishment and delight saluted the scene revealed to view.

At the end of a broad avenue of firs a cool green glade spread its grassy carpet in the midst of the surrounding plantation. The ground at the further end of the glade rose; and here, on the lower slopes, a bright little spring of water bubbled out between gray old granite rocks. Along the right-hand edge of the turf ran a row of tables, arrayed in spotless white, and covered with refreshments waiting for the guests. On the opposite side was a band of music, which burst into harmony at the moment when the curtains were drawn. Looking back through the avenue, the eye caught a distant glimpse of the lake, where the sunlight played on the water, and the plumage of the gliding swans flashed softly in brilliant white. Such was the charming surprise which Julius Delamayn had arranged for his friends. It was only at moments like these—or when he and his wife were playing Sonatas, in the modest little music-room at Swan-haven—that Lord Holchester's eldest son was

really happy. He secretly groaned over the duties which his position as a landed gentleman imposed upon him; and he suffered under some of the highest privileges of his rank and station as under social martyrdom in its cruelest form.

"We'll dine first," said Julius, "and dance afterward. There is the programme!"

He led the way to the tables, with the two ladies nearest to him—utterly careless whether they were or were not among the ladies of the highest rank then present. To Lady Lundie's astonishment he took the first seat he came to, without appearing to care what place he occupied at his own feast. The guests, following his example, sat where they pleased, reckless of precedents and dignities. Mrs. Delamayn, feeling a special interest in a young lady who was shortly to be a bride, took Blanche's arm. Lady Lundie attached herself resolutely to her hostess on the other side. The three sat together. Mrs. Delamayn did her best to encourage Blanche to talk, and Blanche did her best to meet the advances made to her. The experiment succeeded but poorly on either side. Mrs. Delamayn gave it up in despair, and turned to Lady Lundie, with a strong suspicion that some unpleasant subject of reflection was preying privately on the bride's mind. The conclusion was soundly drawn. Blanche's little outbreak of temper with her friend on the terrace, and Blanche's present deficiency of gayety and spirit, were attributable to the same cause. She hid it from her uncle, she hid it from Arnold—but she was as anxious

as ever, and as wretched as ever, about Anne; and she was still on the watch (no matter what Sir Patrick might say or do) to seize the first opportunity of renewing the search for her lost friend.

Meanwhile the eating, the drinking, and the talking went merrily on. The band played its liveliest melodies; the servants kept the glasses constantly filled: round all the tables gayety and freedom reigned supreme. The one conversation in progress, in which the talkers were not in social harmony with each other, was the conversation at Blanche's side, between her stepmother and Mrs. Delamayn.

Among Lady Lundie's other accomplishments the power of making disagreeable discoveries ranked high. At the dinner in the glade she had not failed to notice—what everybody else had passed over—the absence at the festival of the hostess's brother-in-law; and more remarkable still, the disappearance of a lady who was actually one of the guests staying in the house: in plainer words, the disappearance of Mrs. Glenarm.

“Am I mistaken?” said her ladyship, lifting her eyeglass, and looking round the tables. “Surely there is a member of our party missing? I don't see Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn.”

“Geoffrey promised to be here. But he is not particularly attentive, as you may have noticed, to keeping engagements of this sort. Everything is sacrificed to his training. We only see him at rare intervals now.”

With that reply Mrs. Delamayn attempted to change the subject. Lady Lundie lifted her eyeglass, and looked round the tables for the second time.

"Pardon me," persisted her ladyship—"but is it possible that I have discovered another absentee? I don't see Mrs. Glenarm. Yet surely she must be here! Mrs. Glenarm is not training for a foot-race. Do you see her? *I don't.*"

"I missed her when we went out on the terrace, and I have not seen her since."

"Isn't it very odd, dear Mrs. Delamayn?"

"Our guests at Swanhaven, Lady Lundie, have perfect liberty to do as they please."

In those words Mrs. Delamayn (as she fondly imagined) dismissed the subject. But Lady Lundie's robust curiosity proved unassailable by even the broadest hint. Carried away, in all probability, by the infection of merriment about her, her ladyship displayed unexpected reserves of vivacity. The mind declines to realize it; but it is not the less true that this majestic woman actually simpered!

"Shall we put two and two together?" said Lady Lundie, with a ponderous playfulness wonderful to see. "Here, on the one hand, is Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn—a young single man. And here, on the other, is Mrs. Glenarm—a young widow. Rank on the side of the young single man; riches on the side of the young widow. And both mysteriously absent at the same time, from the same pleasant party. Ha, Mrs. Delamayn! should I guess wrong if I

guessed that *you* will have a marriage in the family, too, before long?"

Mrs. Delamayn looked a little annoyed. She had entered, with all her heart, into the conspiracy for making a match between Geoffrey and Mrs. Glenarm. But she was not prepared to own that the lady's facility had (in spite of all attempts to conceal it from discovery) made the conspiracy obviously successful in ten days' time.

"I am not in the secrets of the lady and gentleman whom you mention," she replied, dryly.

A heavy body is slow to acquire movement—and slow to abandon movement, when once acquired. The playfulness of Lady Lundie, being essentially heavy, followed the same rule. She still persisted in being as lively as ever.

"Oh, what a diplomatic answer!" exclaimed her ladyship. "I think I can interpret it, though, for all that. A little bird tells me that I shall see a Mrs. Geoffrey Delamayn in London next season. And I, for one, shall not be surprised to find myself congratulating Mrs. Glenarm."

"If you persist in letting *your* imagination run away with you, Lady Lundie, I can't possibly help it. I can only request permission to keep the bridle on *mine*."

This time even Lady Lundie understood that it would be wise to say no more. She smiled and nodded, in high private approval of her own extraordinary cleverness. If she had been asked at that moment who was the most brilliant Englishwoman living, she would have looked in-

ward on herself—and would have seen, as in a glass brightly, Lady Lundie, of Windygates.

From the moment when the talk at her side entered on the subject of Geoffrey Delamayn and Mrs. Glenarm—and throughout the brief period during which it remained occupied with that topic—Blanche became conscious of a strong smell of some spirituous liquor; wafted down on her, as she fancied, from behind and from above. Finding the odor grow stronger and stronger, she looked round to see whether any special manufacture of grog was proceeding inexplicably at the back of her chair. The moment she moved her head, her attention was claimed by a pair of tremulous, gouty old hands, offering her a grouse pie, profusely sprinkled with truffles.

“Eh, my bonny miss!” whispered a persuasive voice at her ear, “ye’re joost stairving in a land o’ plenty. Tak’ my advice, and ye’ll tak’ the best thing at tebble—grouse-poy and truffles.”

Blanche looked up.

There he was—the man of the canny eye, the fatherly manner, and the mighty nose—Bishopriggs—preserved in spirits, and ministering at the festival at Swanhaven Lodge!

Blanche had only seen him for a moment on the memorable night of the storm, when she had surprised Anne at the inn. But instants passed in the society of Bishopriggs were as good as hours spent in the company of inferior men.



Blanche instantly recognized him; instantly called to mind Sir Patrick's conviction that he was in possession of Anne's lost letter; instantly rushed to the conclusion that, in discovering Bishopriggs, she had discovered a chance of tracing Anne. Her first impulse was to claim acquaintance with him on the spot. But the eyes of her neighbors were on her, warning her to wait. She took a little of the pie, and looked hard at Bishopriggs. That discreet man, showing no sign of recognition on his side, bowed respectfully, and went on round the table.

"I wonder whether he has got the letter about him?" thought Blanche.

He had not only got the letter about him—but, more than that, he was actually then on the lookout for the means of turning the letter to profitable pecuniary account.

The domestic establishment of Swanhaven Lodge included no formidable array of servants. When Mrs. Delamayn gave a large party, she depended for such additional assistance as was needed partly on the contributions of her friends, partly on the resources of the principal inn at Kirkandrew. Mr. Bishopriggs, serving at the time (in the absence of any better employment) as a supernumerary at the inn, made one among the waiters who could be spared to assist at the garden-party. The name of the gentleman by whom he was to be employed for the day had struck him, when he first heard it, as having a familiar sound. He had made his inquiries; and had then betaken himself, for additional infor-



mation, to the letter which he had picked up from the parlor floor at Craig Fernie.

The sheet of note-paper, lost by Anne, contained, it may be remembered, two letters—one signed by herself; the other signed by Geoffrey—and both suggestive, to a stranger's eye, of relations between the writers which they were interested in concealing from the public view.

Thinking it just possible—if he kept his eyes and ears well open at Swanhaven—that he might improve his prospect of making a marketable commodity of the stolen correspondence, Mr. Bishopriggs had put the letter in his pocket when he left Kirkandrew. He had recognized Blanche, as a friend of the lady at the inn—and as a person who might be perhaps turned to account, in that capacity. And he had, moreover, heard every word of the conversation between Lady Lundie and Mrs. Delamayn on the subject of Geoffrey and Mrs. Glenarm. There were hours to be passed before the guests would retire and before the waiters would be dismissed. The conviction was strong in the mind of Mr. Bishopriggs that he might find good reason yet for congratulating himself on the chance which had associated him with the festivities at Swanhaven Lodge.

It was still early in the afternoon when the gayety at the dinner-table began, in certain quarters, to show signs of wearing out.

The young members of the party—especially the ladies—grew restless with the appearance of the dessert. One after another they looked long-

ingly at the smooth level of elastic turf in the middle of the glade. One after another they beat time absently with their fingers to the waltz which the musicians happened to be playing at the moment. Noticing these symptoms, Mrs. Delamayn set the example of rising; and her husband sent a message to the band. In ten minutes more the first quadrille was in progress on the grass; the spectators were picturesquely grouped round, looking on; and the servants and waiters, no longer wanted, had retired out of sight, to a picnic of their own.

The last person to leave the deserted tables was the venerable Bishopriggs. He alone, of the men in attendance, had contrived to combine a sufficient appearance of waiting on the company with a clandestine attention to his own personal need of refreshment. Instead of hurrying away to the servants' dinner with the rest, he made the round of the tables, apparently clearing away the crumbs—actually, emptying the wine-glasses. Immersed in this occupation, he was startled by a lady's voice behind him, and, turning as quickly as he could, found himself face to face with Miss Lundie.

"I want some cold water," said Blanche. "Be so good as to get me some from the spring."

She pointed to the bubbling rivulet at the further end of the glade.

Bishopriggs looked unaffectedly shocked.

"Lord's sake, miss," he exclaimed, "d'ye relly mean to offend yer stomach wi' cauld

water—when there's wine to be had for the asking!"

Blanche gave him a look. Slowness of perception was not on the list of the failings of Bishopriggs; he took up a tumbler, winked with his one available eye, and led the way to the rivulet. There was nothing remarkable in the spectacle of a young lady who wanted a glass of spring-water, or of a waiter who was getting it for her. Nobody was surprised; and (with the band playing) nobody could by any chance overhear what might be said at the spring-side.

"Do you remember me at the inn on the night of the storm?" asked Blanche.

Mr. Bishopriggs had his reasons (carefully inclosed in his pocket-book) for not being too ready to commit himself with Blanche at starting.

"I'm no' saying I canna remember ye, miss. Whar's the man would mak' sic an answer as that to a bonny young leddy like you?"

By way of assisting his memory Blanche took out her purse. Bishopriggs became absorbed in the scenery. He looked at the running water with the eye of a man who thoroughly distrusted it, viewed as a beverage.

"There ye go," he said, addressing himself to the rivulet, "bubblin' to yer ain annihilation in the loch yonder! It's little I know that's gude aboot ye, in yer unconvaired state. Ye're a type o' human life, they say. I tak' up my testimony against *that*. Ye're a type o' naething at all till ye're heated wi' fire, and sweetened wi' sugar, and strengthened wi' whusky; and

then ye're a type o' toddy—and human life (I grant it) has got something to say to ye in that capacity!"

"I have heard more about you since I was at the inn," proceeded Blanche, "than you may suppose." (She opened her purse: Mr. Bishopriggs became the picture of attention.) "You were very, very kind to a lady who was staying at Craig Fernie," she went on, earnestly. "I know that you have lost your place at the inn, because you gave all your attention to that lady. She is my dearest friend, Mr. Bishopriggs. I want to thank you. I do thank you. Please accept what I have got here?"

All the girl's heart was in her eyes and in her voice as she emptied her purse into the gouty (and greedy) old hand of Bishopriggs.

A young lady with a well-filled purse (no matter how rich the young lady may be) is a combination not often witnessed in any country on the civilized earth. Either the money is always spent, or the money has been forgotten on the toilet-table at home. Blanche's purse contained a sovereign and some six or seven shillings in silver. As pocket-money for an heiress it was contemptible. But as a gratuity to Bishopriggs it was magnificent. The old rascal put the money into his pocket with one hand, and dashed away the tears of sensibility, which he had *not* shed, with the other.

"Cast yer bread on the waters," cried Mr. Bishopriggs, with his one eye raised devotionally to the sky, "and ye sall find it again after

monny days! Hech! hech! didna I say when I first set eyes on that puir leddy, 'I feel like a fether to ye?' It's seemply mairvelous to see hoo a man's ain gude deeds find him oot in this lower warld o' ours. If ever I heard the voice o' naitural affection speaking in my ain breast," pursued Mr. Bishopriggs, with his eye fixed in uneasy expectation on Blanche, "it joost spak' trumpet-tongued when that winsome creature first lookit at me. Will it be she now that told ye of the wee bit sairvice I rendered to her in the time when I was in bondage at the hottle?"

"Yes—she told me herself."

"Might I mak' sae bauld as to ask whar' she may be at the present time?"

"I don't know, Mr. Bishopriggs. I am more miserable about it than I can say. She has gone away—and I don't know where."

"Ow! ow! that's bad. And the bit husband-creature danglin' at her petticoat's tail one day, and awa' wi' the sunrise next mornin'—have they baith taken leg-bail together?"

"I know nothing of him; I never saw him. You saw him. Tell me—what was he like?"

"Eh! he was joost a puir weak creature. Didn't know a glass o' good sherry-wine when he'd got it. Free wi' the siller—that's a' ye can say for him—free wi' the siller!"

Finding it impossible to extract from Mr. Bishopriggs any clearer description of the man who had been with Anne at the inn than this, Blanche approached the main object of the inter-

view. Too anxious to waste time in circumlocution, she turned the conversation at once to the delicate and doubtful subject of the lost letter.

"There is something else that I want to say to you," she resumed. "My friend had a loss while she was staying at the inn."

The clouds of doubt rolled off the mind of Mr. Bishopriggs. The lady's friend knew of the lost letter. And, better still, the lady's friend looked as if she wanted it!

"Ay! ay!" he said, with all due appearance of carelessness. "Like enough. From the mistress downward, they're a' kittle cattle at the inn since I've left 'em. What may it ha' been that she lost?"

"She lost a letter."

The look of uneasy expectation re-appeared in the eye of Mr. Bishopriggs. It was a question—and a serious question, from his point of view—whether any suspicion of theft was attached to the disappearance of the letter.

"When ye say 'lost,' " he asked, "d'ye mean stolen?"

Blanche was quite quick enough to see the necessity of quieting his mind on this point.

"Oh no!" she answered. "Not stolen. Only lost. Did you hear about it?"

"Wherefore suld *I* ha' heard about it?" He looked hard at Blanche—and detected a momentary hesitation in her face. "Tell me this, my young leddy," he went on, advancing warily nearer to the point. "When ye're speering for



news o' your friend's lost letter—what sets ye on comin' to *me* ?”

Those words were decisive. It is hardly too much to say that Blanche's future depended on Blanche's answer to that question.

If she could have produced the money; and if she had said, boldly, “You have got the letter, Mr. Bishopriggs: I pledge my word that no questions shall be asked, and I offer you ten pounds for it”—in all probability the bargain would have been struck; and the whole course of coming events would, in that case, have been altered. But she had no money left; and there were no friends, in the circle at Swanhaven, to whom she could apply, without being misinterpreted, for a loan of ten pounds, to be privately intrusted to her on the spot. Under stress of sheer necessity Blanche abandoned all hope of making any present appeal of a pecuniary nature to the confidence of Bishopriggs.

The one other way of attaining her object that she could see was to arm herself with the influence of Sir Patrick's name. A man, placed in her position, would have thought it mere madness to venture on such a risk as this. But Blanche—with one act of rashness already on her conscience—rushed, woman-like, straight to the commission of another. The same headlong eagerness to reach her end, which had hurried her into questioning Geoffrey before he left Windygates, now drove her, just as recklessly, into taking the management of Bishopriggs out of Sir Patrick's skilled and practiced hands. The



starving sisterly love in her hungered for a trace of Anne. Her heart whispered, Risk it! And Blanche risked it on the spot.

"Sir Patrick set me on coming to you," she said.

The opening hand of Mr. Bishopriggs—ready to deliver the letter, and receive the reward—closed again instantly as she spoke those words.

"Sir Paitrick?" he repeated. "Ow! ow! ye've een tauld Sir Paitrick about it, have ye? There's a chiel wi' a lang head on his shouthers, if ever there was ane yet! What might Sir Paitrick ha' said?"

Blanche noticed a change in his tone. Blanche was rigidly careful (when it was too late) to answer him in guarded terms.

"Sir Patrick thought you might have found the letter," she said, "and might not have remembered about it again until after you had left the inn."

Bishopriggs looked back into his own personal experience of his old master—and drew the correct conclusion that Sir Patrick's view of his connection with the disappearance of the letter was not the purely unsuspicious view reported by Blanche. "The dour auld deevil," he thought to himself, "knows me better than *that*!"

"Well?" asked Blanche, impatiently; "is Sir Patrick right?"

"Richt?" rejoined Bishopriggs, briskly. "He's as far awa' from the truth as John o' Groat's house is from Jericho."

"You know nothing of the letter?"

“Deil a bit I know o’ the letter. The first I ha’ heard o’ it is what I hear noo.”

Blanche’s heart sank within her. Had she defeated her own object, and cut the ground from under Sir Patrick’s feet, for the second time? Surely not! There was unquestionably a chance, on this occasion, that the man might be prevailed upon to place the trust in her uncle which he was too cautious to confide to a stranger like herself. The one wise thing to do now was to pave the way for the exertion of Sir Patrick’s superior influence, and Sir Patrick’s superior skill. She resumed the conversation with that object in view.

“I am sorry to hear that Sir Patrick has guessed wrong,” she resumed. “My friend was anxious to recover the letter when I last saw her; and I hoped to hear news of it from you. However, right or wrong, Sir Patrick has some reasons for wishing to see you—and I take the opportunity of telling you so. He has left a letter to wait for you at the Craig Fernie inn.”

“I’m thinking the letter will ha’ lang eneugh to wait, if it waits till I gae back for it to the hottle,” remarked Bishopriggs.

“In that case,” said Blanche, promptly, “you had better give me an address at which Sir Patrick can write to you. You wouldn’t, I suppose, wish me to say that I had seen you here, and that you refused to communicate with him?”

“Never think it!” cried Bishopriggs, fervently. “If there’s ain thing mair than anither that I’m carefu’ to presairve intact, it’s joost the respect-

ful attention that I owe to Sir Paitrick. I'll make sae bauld, miss, as to chairge ye wi' that bit caird. I'm no' settled in ony place yet (mair's the pity at my time o' life!), but Sir Paitrick may hear of me, when Sir Paitrick has need o' me, there." He handed a dirty little card to Blanche containing the name and address of a butcher in Edinburgh. "Sawmuel Bishopriggs," he went on, glibly. "Care o' Davie Dow, flesher; Cowgate, Embro. My Patmos in the weelderness, miss, for the time being."

Blanche received the address with a sense of unspeakable relief. If she had once more ventured on taking Sir Patrick's place, and once more failed in justifying her rashness by the results, she had at least gained some atoning advantage, this time, by opening a means of communication between her uncle and Bishopriggs. "You will hear from Sir Patrick," she said, and nodded kindly, and returned to her place among the guests.

"I'll hear from Sir Paitrick, wull I?" repeated Bishopriggs, when he was left by himself. "Sir Paitrick will wark naething less than a meeracle if he finds Sawmuel Bishopriggs at the Cowgate, Embro!"

He laughed softly over his own cleverness; and withdrew to a lonely place in the plantation, in which he could consult the stolen correspondence without fear of being observed by any living creature. Once more the truth had tried to struggle into light, before the day of the mar-

riage, and once more Blanche had innocently helped the darkness to keep it from view.

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## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-THIRD.

### SEEDS OF THE FUTURE (THIRD SOWING).

AFTER a new and attentive reading of Anne's letter to Geoffrey, and of Geoffrey's letter to Anne, Bishopriggs laid down comfortably under a tree, and set himself the task of seeing his position plainly as it was at that moment.

The profitable disposal of the correspondence to Blanche was no longer among the possibilities involved in the case. As for treating with Sir Patrick, Bishopriggs determined to keep equally clear of the Cowgate, Edinburgh, and of Mrs. Inchbare's inn, so long as there was the faintest chance of his pushing his own interests in any other quarter. No person living would be capable of so certainly extracting the correspondence from him, on such ruinously cheap terms, as his old master. "I'll no' put myself under Sir Paitrick's thumb," thought Bishopriggs, "till I've gane my ain rounds among the lave o' them first."

Rendered into intelligible English, this resolution pledged him to hold no communication with Sir Patrick—until he had first tested his success in negotiating with other persons, who might be equally interested in getting possession of the

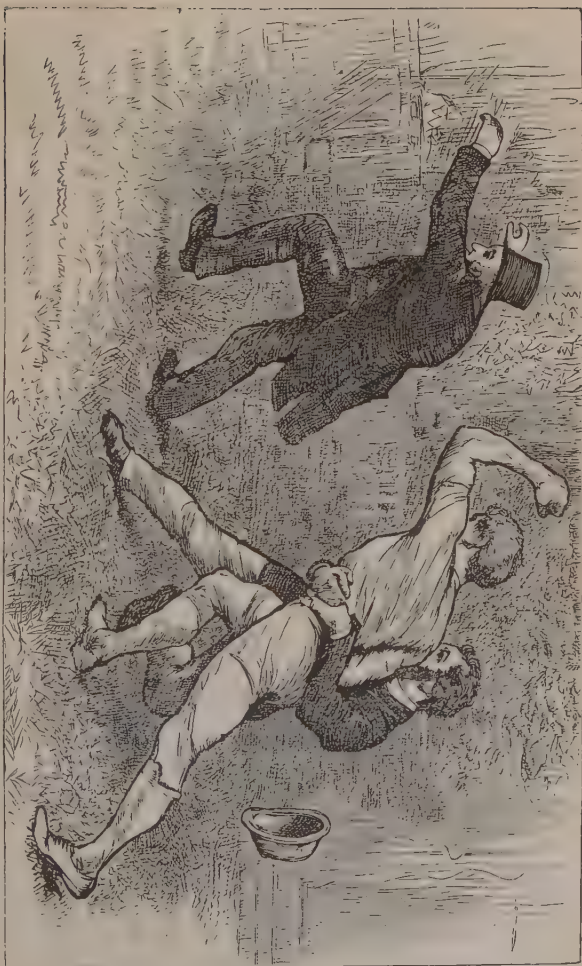
correspondence, and more liberal in giving hush-money to the thief who had stolen it.

Who were the "other persons" at his disposal, under these circumstances?

He had only to recall the conversation which he had overheard between Lady Lundie and Mrs. Delamayn to arrive at the discovery of one person, to begin with, who was directly interested in getting possession of his own letter. Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn was in a fair way of being married to a lady named Mrs. Glenarm. And here was this same Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn in matrimonial correspondence, little more than a fortnight since, with another lady—who signed herself "Anne Silvester."

Whatever his position between the two women might be, his interest in possessing himself of the correspondence was plain beyond all doubt. It was equally clear that the first thing to be done by Bishopriggs was to find the means of obtaining a personal interview with him. If the interview led to nothing else, it would decide one important question which still remained to be solved. The lady whom Bishopriggs had waited on at Craig Fernie might well be "Anne Silvester." Was Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn, in that case, the gentleman who had passed as her husband at the inn?

Bishopriggs rose to his gouty feet with all possible alacrity, and hobbled away to make the necessary inquiries, addressing himself, not to the men-servants at the dinner-table, who would be sure to insist on his joining them, but to the



GEORGEY LIFTED HIS MIGHTY FIST, AND SPRANG FORWARD A STEP.

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 515.





women-servants left in charge of the empty house.

He easily obtained the necessary directions for finding the cottage. But he was warned that Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn's trainer allowed nobody to see his patron at exercise, and that he would certainly be ordered off again the moment he appeared on the scene.

Bearing this caution in mind, Bishopriggs made a circuit, on reaching the open ground, so as to approach the cottage at the back, under shelter of the trees behind it. One look at Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn was all that he wanted in the first instance. They were welcome to order him off again, as long as he obtained that.

He was still hesitating at the outer line of the trees, when he heard a loud, imperative voice, calling from the front of the cottage, "Now, Mr. Geoffrey! Time's up!" Another voice answered, "All right!" and, after an interval, Geoffrey Delamayn appeared on the open ground, proceeding to the point from which he was accustomed to walk his measured mile.

Advancing a few steps to look at his man more closely, Bishopriggs was instantly detected by the quick eye of the trainer. "Halloo!" cried Perry, "what do you want here?" Bishopriggs opened his lips to make an excuse. "Who the devil are you?" roared Geoffrey. The trainer answered the question out of the resources of his own experience. "A spy, sir—sent to time you at your work." Geoffrey lifted his mighty fist and sprang forward a step. Perry held his

patron back. "You can't do that, sir," he said; "the man's too old. No fear of his turning up again—you've scared him out of his wits." The statement was strictly true. The terror of Bishopriggs at the sight of Geoffrey's fist restored to him the activity of his youth. He ran for the first time for twenty years; and only stopped to remember his infirmities, and to catch his breath, when he was out of sight of the cottage, among the trees.

He sat down to rest and recover himself, with the comforting inner conviction that, in one respect at least, he had gained his point. The furious savage, with the eyes that darted fire and the fist that threatened destruction, was a total stranger to him. In other words, *not* the man who had passed as the lady's husband at the inn.

At the same time it was equally certain that he *was* the man involved in the compromising correspondence which Bishopriggs possessed. To appeal, however, to his interest in obtaining the letter was entirely incompatible (after the recent exhibition of his fist) with the strong regard which Bishopriggs felt for his own personal security. There was no alternative now but to open negotiations with the one other person concerned in the matter (fortunately, on this occasion, a person of the gentler sex), who was actually within reach. Mrs. Glenarm was at Swanhaven. She had a direct interest in clearing up the question of a prior claim to Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn on the part of another woman. And

she could only do that by getting the correspondence into her own hands.

"Praise Providence for a' its mercies!" said Bishopriggs, getting on his feet again. "I've got twa strings, as they say, to my boo. I trow the woman's the canny string o' the twa—and we'll een try the twanging of her."

He set forth on his road back again, to search among the company at the lake for Mrs. Glen-arm.

The dance had reached its climax of animation when Bishopriggs re-appeared on the scene of his duties; and the ranks of the company had been recruited, in his absence, by the very person whom it was now his foremost object to approach.

Receiving, with supple submission, a reprimand for his prolonged absence from the chief of the servants, Bishopriggs—keeping his one observant eye carefully on the look-out—busied himself in promoting the circulation of ices and cool drinks.

While he was thus occupied, his attention was attracted by two persons who, in very different ways, stood out prominently as marked characters among the rank and file of the guests.

The first person was a vivacious, irascible old gentleman, who persisted in treating the undeniable fact of his age on the footing of a scandalous false report set afloat by time. He was superbly strapped and padded. His hair, his teeth, and his complexion were triumphs of artificial youth. When he was not occupied among the

youngest women present—which was very seldom—he attached himself exclusively to the youngest men. He insisted on joining every dance. Twice he measured his length upon the grass; but nothing daunted him. He was waltzing again, with another young woman, at the next dance, as if nothing had happened. Inquiring who this effervescent old gentleman might be, Bishopriggs discovered that he was a retired officer in the navy; commonly known (among his inferiors) as “The Tartar;” more formally described in society as Captain Newenden, the last male representative of one of the oldest families in England.

The second person, who appeared to occupy a position of distinction at the dance in the glade, was a lady.

To the eye of Bishopriggs, she was a miracle of beauty, with a small fortune for a poor man carried about her in silk, lace and jewelry. No woman present was the object of such special attention among the men as this fascinating and priceless creature. She sat fanning herself with a matchless work of art (supposed to be a handkerchief) representing an island of cambric in the midst of an ocean of lace. She was surrounded by a little court of admirers, who fetched and carried at her slightest nod, like well-trained dogs. Sometimes they brought refreshments, which she had asked for, only to decline taking them when they came. Sometimes they brought information of what was going on among the dancers, which the lady had been eager to re-

ceive when they went away, and in which she had ceased to feel the smallest interest when they came back. Everybody burst into ejaculations of distress when she was asked to account for her absence from the dinner, and answered, "My poor nerves." Everybody said, "What should we have done without you!"—when she doubted if she had done wisely in joining the party at all. Inquiring who this favored lady might be, Bishopriggs discovered that she was the niece of the indomitable old gentleman who *would* dance—or, more plainly still, no less a person than his contemplated customer, Mrs. Glenarm.

With all his enormous assurance, Bishopriggs was daunted when he found himself facing the question of what he was to do next.

To open negotiations with Mrs. Glenarm, under present circumstances, was, for a man in his position, simply impossible. But, apart from this, the prospect of profitably addressing himself to that lady in the future was, to say the least of it, beset with difficulties of no common kind.

Supposing the means of disclosing Geoffrey's position to her to be found—what would she do when she received her warning? She would in all probability apply to one of two formidable men, both of whom were interested in the matter. If she went straight to the man accused of attempting to marry her, at a time when he was already engaged to another woman—Bishopriggs would find himself confronted with the owner of that terrible fist, which had justly terrified him even on a distant and cursory view. If, on the

other hand, she placed her interests in the care of her uncle—Bishopriggs had only to look at the captain, and to calculate his chance of imposing terms on a man who owed Life a bill of more than sixty years' date, and who openly defied Time to recover the debt.

With these serious obstacles standing in the way, what was to be done? The only alternative left was to approach Mrs. Glenarm under shelter of the dark.

Reaching this conclusion, Bishopriggs decided to ascertain from the servants what the lady's future movements might be; and, thus informed, to startle her by anonymous warnings, conveyed through the post, and claiming their answer through the advertising channel of a newspaper. Here was the certainty of alarming her, coupled with the certainty of safety to himself! Little did Mrs. Glenarm dream, when she capriciously stopped a servant going by with some glasses of lemonade, that the wretched old creature who offered the tray contemplated corresponding with her before the week was out, in the double character of her "Well-Wisher" and her "True Friend."

The evening advanced. The shadows lengthened. The waters of the lake grew pitchy black. The gliding of the ghostly swans became rare and more rare. The elders of the party thought of the drive home. The juniors (excepting Captain Newenden) began to flag at the dance. Little by little the comfortable attractions of the house—tea, coffee, and candle-light in snug



rooms—resumed their influence. The guests abandoned the glade; and the fingers and lungs of the musicians rested at last.

Lady Lundie and her party were the first to send for the carriage and say farewell; the break-up of the household at Windygates on the next day, and the journey south, being sufficient apologies for setting the example of retreat. In an hour more the only visitors left were the guests staying at Swanhaven Lodge.

The company gone, the hired waiters from Kirkandrew were paid and dismissed.

On the journey back the silence of Bishopriggs created some surprise among his comrades. "I've got my ain concerns to think of," was the only answer he vouchsafed to the remonstrances addressed to him. "The concerns" alluded to comprehended, among other changes of plan, his departure from Kirkandrew the next day—with a reference, in case of inquiries, to his convenient friend at the Cowgate, Edinburgh. His actual destination—to be kept a secret from everybody—was Perth. The neighborhood of this town—as stated on the authority of her own maid—was the part of Scotland to which the rich widow contemplated removing when she left Swanhaven in two days' time. At Perth, Bishopriggs knew of more than one place in which he could get temporary employment—and at Perth he determined to make his first anonymous advances to Mrs. Glenarm.

The remainder of the evening passed quietly enough at the Lodge.



The guests were sleepy and dull after the excitement of the day. Mrs. Glenarm retired early. At eleven o'clock Julius Delamayn was the only person left up in the house. He was understood to be in his study, preparing an address to the electors, based on instructions sent from London by his father. He was actually occupied in the music-room—now that there was nobody to discover him—playing exercises softly on his beloved violin.

At the trainer's cottage a trifling incident occurred, that night, which afforded materials for a note in Perry's professional diary.

Geoffrey had sustained the later trial of walking for a given time and distance, at his full speed, without showing any of those symptoms of exhaustion which had followed the more serious experiment of running, to which he had been subjected earlier in the day. Perry, honestly bent—though he had privately hedged his own bets—on doing his best to bring his man in good order to the post on the day of the race, had forbidden Geoffrey to pay his evening visit to the house, and had sent him to bed earlier than usual. The trainer was alone, looking over his own written rules, and considering what modifications he should introduce into the diet and exercises of the next day, when he was startled by a sound of groaning from the bedroom in which his patron lay asleep.

He went in, and found Geoffrey rolling to and fro on the pillow, with his face contorted, with his hands clinched, and with the perspiration

standing thick on his forehead—suffering evidently under the nervous oppression produced by the phantom-terrors of a dream.

Perry spoke to him and pulled him up in the bed. He woke with a scream. He stared at his trainer in vacant terror, and spoke to his trainer in wild words. “What are your horrid eyes looking at over my shoulder?” he cried out. “Go to the devil—and take your infernal slate with you!” Perry spoke to him once more. “You’ve been dreaming of somebody, Mr. Delamayn. What’s to do about a slate?” Geoffrey looked eagerly round the room, and heaved a heavy breath of relief. “I could have sworn she was staring at me over the dwarf pear-trees,” he said. “All right, I know where I am now.” Perry (attributing the dream to nothing more important than a passing indigestion) administered some brandy and water, and left him to drop off again to sleep. He fretfully forbade the extinguishing of the light. “Afraid of the dark?” said Perry, with a laugh. No. He was afraid of dreaming again of the dumb cook at Windygates House.

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*SEVENTH SCENE.—HAM FARM.*

## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FOURTH.

## THE NIGHT BEFORE.

THE time was the night before the marriage. The place was Sir Patrick's house in Kent.

The lawyers had kept their word. The settlements had been forwarded, and had been signed two days since.

With the exception of the surgeon and one of the three young gentlemen from the University, who had engagements elsewhere, the visitors at Windygates had emigrated southward to be present at the marriage. Besides these gentlemen, there were some ladies among the guests invited by Sir Patrick—all of them family connections, and three of them appointed to the position of Blanche's bridesmaids. Add one or two neighbors to be invited to the breakfast, and the wedding-party would be complete.

There was nothing architecturally remarkable about Sir Patrick's house. Ham Farm possessed neither the splendor of Windygates nor the picturesque antiquarian attraction of Swanhaven. It was a perfectly commonplace English country seat, surrounded by perfectly commonplace English scenery. Snug monotony welcomed you when you went in, and snug monotony met you

again when you turned to the window and looked out.

The animation and variety wanting at Ham Farm were far from being supplied by the company in the house. It was remembered, at an after-period, that a duller wedding-party had never been assembled together.

Sir Patrick, having no early associations with the place, openly admitted that his residence in Kent preyed on his spirits, and that he would have infinitely preferred a room at the inn in the village. The effort to sustain his customary vivacity was not encouraged by persons and circumstances about him. Lady Lundie's fidelity to the memory of the late Sir Thomas on the scene of his last illness and death persisted in asserting itself, under an ostentation of concealment which tried even the trained temper of Sir Patrick himself. Blanche, still depressed by her private anxieties about Anne, was in no condition of mind to look gayly at the last memorable days of her maiden life. Arnold, sacrificed—by express stipulation on the part of Lady Lundie—to the prurient delicacy which forbids the bridegroom, before marriage, to sleep in the same house with the bride, found himself ruthlessly shut out from Sir Patrick's hospitality, and exiled every night to a bedroom at the inn. He accepted his solitary doom with a resignation which extended its sobering influence to his customary flow of spirits. As for the ladies, the elder among them existed in a state of chronic protest against Lady Lundie, and the younger

were absorbed in the essentially serious occupation of considering and comparing their wedding-dresses. The two young gentlemen from the University performed prodigies of yawning in the intervals of prodigies of billiard-playing. Smith said, in despair, "There's no making things pleasant in this house, Jones." And Jones sighed, and mildly agreed with him.

On the Sunday evening—which was the evening before the marriage—the dullness, as a matter of course, reached its climax.

But two of the occupations in which people may indulge on week days are regarded as harmless on Sunday by the obstinately anti-Christian tone of feeling which prevails in this matter among the Anglo-Saxon race. It is not sinful to wrangle in religious controversy; and it is not sinful to slumber over a religious book. The ladies at Ham Farm practiced the pious observance of the evening on this plan. The seniors of the sex wrangled in Sunday controversy; and the juniors of the sex slumbered over Sunday books. As for the men, it is unnecessary to say that the young ones smoked when they were not yawning, and yawned when they were not smoking. Sir Patrick stayed in the library, sorting old letters and examining old accounts. Every person in the house felt the oppression of the senseless social prohibitions which they had imposed on themselves. And yet every person in the house would have been scandalized if the plain question had been put: You know this is a tyranny of your own making,

you know you don't really believe in it, you know you don't really like it—why do you submit? The freest people on the civilized earth are the only people on the civilized earth who dare not face that question.

The evening dragged its slow length on; the welcome time drew nearer and nearer for oblivion in bed. Arnold was silently contemplating, for the last time, his customary prospects of banishment to the inn, when he became aware that Sir Patrick was making signs to him. He rose, and followed his host into the empty dining-room. Sir Patrick carefully closed the door. What did it mean?

It meant—so far as Arnold was concerned—that a private conversation was about to diversify the monotony of the long Sunday evening at Ham Farm.

"I have a word to say to you, Arnold," the old gentleman began, "before you become a married man. Do you remember the conversation at dinner yesterday about the dancing-party at Swanhaven Lodge?"

"Yes."

"Do you remember what Lady Lundie said while the topic was on the table?"

"She told me, what I can't believe, that Geoffrey Delamayn was going to be married to Mrs. Glenarm."

"Exactly! I observed that you appeared to be startled by what my sister-in-law had said; and when you declared that appearances must certainly have misled her, you looked and spoke

(to my mind) like a man animated by a strong feeling of indignation. Was I wrong in drawing that conclusion?"

"No, Sir Patrick. You were right."

"Have you any objection to tell me why you felt indignant?"

Arnold hesitated.

"You are probably at a loss to know what interest *I* can feel in the matter?"

Arnold admitted it with his customary frankness.

"In that case," rejoined Sir Patrick, "I had better go on at once with the matter in hand—leaving you to see for yourself the connection between what I am about to say and the question that I have just put. When I have done, you shall then reply to me, or not, exactly as you think right. My dear boy, the subject on which I want to speak to you is—Miss Silvester."

Arnold started. Sir Patrick looked at him with a moment's attention, and went on:

"My niece has her faults of temper and her failings of judgment," he said. "But she has one atoning quality (among many others) which ought to make—and which I believe will make—the happiness of your married life. In the popular phrase, Blanche is as true as steel. Once her friend always her friend. Do you see what I am coming to? She has said nothing about it, Arnold; but she has not yielded one inch in her resolution to reunite herself to Miss Silvester. One of the first questions



you will have to determine, after to-morrow, will be the question of whether you do, or not, sanction your wife in attempting to communicate with her lost friend."

Arnold answered without the slightest reserve.

"I am heartily sorry for Blanche's lost friend, Sir Patrick. My wife will have my full approval if she tries to bring Miss Silvester back—and my best help too, if I can give it."

Those words were earnestly spoken. It was plain that they came from his heart.

"I think you are wrong," said Sir Patrick. "I, too, am sorry for Miss Silvester. But I am convinced that she has not left Blanche without a serious reason for it. And I believe you will be encouraging your wife in a hopeless effort, if you encourage her to persist in the search for her lost friend. However, it is your affair, and not mine. Do you wish me to offer you any facilities for tracing Miss Silvester which I may happen to possess?"

"If you *can* help us over any obstacles at starting, Sir Patrick, it will be a kindness to Blanche, and a kindness to me."

"Very good. I suppose you remember what I said to you, one morning, when we were talking of Miss Silvester at Windygates?"

"You said you had determined to let her go her own way."

"Quite right! On the evening of the day when I said that I received information that Miss Silvester had been traced to Glasgow. You won't require me to explain why I never men-

tioned this to you or to Blanche. In mentioning it now, I communicate to you the only positive information, on the subject of the missing woman, which I possess. There are two other chances of finding her (of a more speculative kind) which can only be tested by inducing two men (both equally difficult to deal with) to confess what they know. One of those two men is—a person named Bishopriggs, formerly waiter at the Craig Fernie inn.”

Arnold started, and changed color. Sir Patrick (silently noticing him) stated the circumstances relating to Anne’s lost letter, and to the conclusion in his own mind which pointed to Bishopriggs as the person in possession of it.

“I have to add,” he proceeded, “that Blanche, unfortunately, found an opportunity of speaking to Bishopriggs at Swanhaven. When she and Lady Lundie joined us at Edinburgh she showed me privately a card which had been given to her by Bishopriggs. He had described it as the address at which he might be heard of—and Blanche entreated me, before we started for London, to put the reference to the test. I told her that she had committed a serious mistake in attempting to deal with Bishopriggs on her own responsibility; and I warned her of the result in which I was firmly persuaded the inquiry would end. She declined to believe that Bishopriggs had deceived her. I saw that she would take the matter into her own hands again unless I interfered, and I went to the place. Exactly as I had anticipated, the person to whom the card

referred me had not heard of Bishopriggs for years, and knew nothing whatever about his present movements. Blanche had simply put him on his guard, and shown him the propriety of keeping out of the way. If you should ever meet with him in the future—say nothing to your wife, and communicate with me. I decline to assist you in searching for Miss Silvester; but I have no objection to assist in recovering a stolen letter from a thief. So much for Bishopriggs.—Now as to the other man.”

“Who is he?”

“Your friend, Mr. Geoffrey Delamayn.”

Arnold sprang to his feet in ungovernable surprise.

“I appear to astonish you,” remarked Sir Patrick.

Arnold sat down again, and waited, in speechless suspense, to hear what was coming next.

“I have reason to know,” said Sir Patrick, “that Mr. Delamayn is thoroughly well acquainted with the nature of Miss Silvester’s present troubles. What his actual connection is with them, and how he came into possession of his information, I have not found out. My discovery begins and ends with the simple fact that he *has* the information.”

“May I ask one question, Sir Patrick?”

“What is it?”

“How did you find out about Geoffrey Delamayn?”

“It would occupy a long time,” answered Sir Patrick, “to tell you how—and it is not at all

necessary to our purpose that you should know. My present obligation merely binds me to tell you—in strict confidence, mind!—that Miss Silvester's secrets are no secrets to Mr. Delamayn. I leave to your discretion the use you may make of that information. You are now entirely on a par with me in relation to your knowledge of the case of Miss Silvester. Let us return to the question which I asked you when we first came into the room. Do you see the connection, now, between that question and what I have said since?"

Arnold was slow to see the connection. His mind was running on Sir Patrick's discovery. Little dreaming that he was indebted to Mrs. Inchbare's incomplete description of him for his own escape from detection, he was wondering how it had happened that *he* had remained unsuspected, while Geoffrey's position had been (in part at least) revealed to view.

"I asked you," resumed Sir Patrick, attempting to help him, "why the mere report that your friend was likely to marry Mrs. Glenarm roused your indignation, and you hesitated at giving an answer. Do you hesitate still?"

"It is not easy to give an answer, Sir Patrick."

"Let us put it in another way. I assume that your view of the report takes its rise in some knowledge, on your part, of Mr. Delamayn's private affairs, which the rest of us don't possess. —Is that conclusion correct?"

"Quite correct."

"Is what you know about Mr. Delamayn connected with anything that you know about Miss Silvester?"

If Arnold had felt himself at liberty to answer that question, Sir Patrick's suspicions would have been aroused, and Sir Patrick's resolution would have forced a full disclosure from him before he left the house.

It was getting on to midnight. The first hour of the wedding-day was at hand, as the truth made its final effort to struggle into light. The dark Phantoms of Trouble and Terror to come were waiting near them both at that moment. Arnold hesitated again—hesitated painfully. Sir Patrick paused for his answer. The clock in the hall struck the quarter to twelve.

"I can't tell you!" said Arnold.

"Is it a secret?"

"Yes."

"Committed to your honor?"

"Doubly committed to my honor."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean that Geoffrey and I have quarreled since he took me into his confidence. I am doubly bound to respect his confidence after that."

"Is the cause of your quarrel a secret also?"

"Yes."

Sir Patrick looked Arnold steadily in the face.

"I have felt an inveterate distrust of Mr. Delamayn from the first," he said. "Answer me this. Have you any reason to think—since we first talked about your friend in the summer—

house at Windygates—that my opinion of him might have been the right one after all?”

“He has bitterly disappointed me,” answered Arnold. “I can say no more.”

“You have had very little experience of the world,” proceeded Sir Patrick. “And you have just acknowledged that you have had reason to distrust your experience of your friend. Are you quite sure that you are acting wisely in keeping his secret from *me*? Are you quite sure that you will not repent the course you are taking to-night?” He laid a marked emphasis on those last words. “Think, Arnold,” he added, kindly—“think before you answer.”

“I feel bound in honor to keep his secret,” said Arnold. “No thinking can alter that.”

Sir Patrick rose, and brought the interview to an end.

“There is nothing more to be said.” With those words he gave Arnold his hand, and, pressing it cordially, wished him good-night.

Going out into the hall, Arnold found Blanche alone, looking at the barometer.

“The glass is at Set Fair, my darling,” he whispered. “Good-night for the last time!”

He took her in his arms and kissed her. At the moment when he released her Blanche slipped a little note into his hand.

“Read it,” she whispered, “when you are alone at the inn.”

So they parted on the eve of their wedding-day.

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## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-FIFTH.

## THE DAY.

THE promise of the weather-glass was fulfilled. The sun shone on Blanche's marriage.

At nine in the morning the first of the proceedings of the day began. It was essentially of a clandestine nature. The bride and bridegroom evaded the restraints of lawful authority, and presumed to meet together privately, before they were married, in the conservatory at Ham Farm.

"You have read my letter, Arnold?"

"I have come here to answer it, Blanche. But why not have told me? Why write?"

"Because I put off telling you so long, and because I didn't know how you might take it; and for fifty other reasons. Never mind! I've made my confession. I haven't a single secret now which is not your secret too. There's time to say No, Arnold, if you think I ought to have no room in my heart for anybody but you. My uncle tells me I am obstinate and wrong in refusing to give Anne up. If you agree with him, say the word, dear, before you make me your wife."

"Shall I tell you what I said to Sir Patrick last night?"

"About *this*?"

"Yes. The confession (as you call it) which



you make in your pretty note, is the very thing that Sir Patrick spoke to me about in the dining-room before I went away. He told me your heart was set on finding Miss Silvester. And he asked me what I meant to do about it when we were married."

"And you said—?"

Arnold repeated his answer to Sir Patrick, with fervid embellishments of the original language, suitable to the emergency. Blanche's delight expressed itself in the form of two unblushing outrages on propriety, committed in close succession. She threw her arms round Arnold's neck; and she actually kissed him, three hours before the consent of State and Church sanctioned her in taking that proceeding. Let us shudder—but let us not blame her. These are the consequences of free institutions.

"Now," said Arnold, "it's my turn to take to pen and ink. I have a letter to write before we are married as well as you. Only there's this difference between us—I want you to help me."

"Who are you going to write to?"

"To my lawyer in Edinburgh. There will be no time unless I do it now. We start for Switzerland this afternoon—don't we?"

"Yes."

"Very well. I want to relieve your mind, my darling, before we go. Wouldn't you like to know—while we are away—that the right people are on the look-out for Miss Silvester? Sir Patrick has told me of the last place that she has been traced to, and my lawyer will set the right

people at work. Come and help me to put it in the proper language, and the whole thing will be in train."

"Oh, Arnold! can I ever love you enough to reward you for this!"

"We shall see, Blanche—in Switzerland."

They audaciously penetrated, arm in arm, into Sir Patrick's own study—entirely at their disposal, as they well knew, at that hour of the morning. With Sir Patrick's pens and Sir Patrick's paper they produced a letter of instructions, deliberately re-opening the investigation which Sir Patrick's superior wisdom had closed. Neither pains nor money were to be spared by the lawyer in at once taking measures (beginning at Glasgow) to find Anne. The report of the result was to be addressed to Arnold, under cover to Sir Patrick at Ham Farm. By the time the letter was completed the morning had advanced to ten o'clock. Blanche left Arnold to array herself in her bridal splendor—after another outrage on propriety, and more consequences of free institutions.

The next proceedings were of a public and avowable nature, and strictly followed the customary precedents on such occasions.

Village nymphs strewed flowers on the path to the church door (and sent in the bill the same day). Village swains rang the joy-bells (and got drunk on their money the same evening). There was the proper and awful pause while the bridegroom was kept waiting at the church. There was the proper and pitiless staring of all

the female spectators when the bride was led to the altar. There was the clergyman's preliminary look at the license—which meant official caution. And there was the clerk's preliminary look at the bridegroom—which meant official fees. All the women appeared to be in their natural element; and all the men appeared to be out of it.

Then the service began—rightly considered, the most terrible, surely, of all mortal ceremonies—the service which binds two human beings, who know next to nothing of each other's natures, to risk the tremendous experiment of living together till death parts them—the service which says, in effect if not in words, Take your leap in the dark: we sanctify, but we don't insure, it!

The ceremony went on, without the slightest obstacle to mar its effect. There were no unforeseen interruptions. There were no ominous mistakes.

The last words were spoken, and the book was closed. They signed their names on the register; the husband was congratulated; the wife was embraced. They went back again to the house, with more flowers strewn at their feet. The wedding-breakfast was hurried; the wedding-speeches were curtailed: there was no time to be wasted, if the young couple were to catch the tidal train.

In an hour more the carriage had whirled them away to the station, and the guests had given them the farewell cheer from the steps of the house. Young, happy, fondly attached to each

other, raised securely above all the sordid cares of life, what a golden future was theirs! Married with the sanction of the Family and the blessing of the Church—who could suppose that the time was coming, nevertheless, when the blighting question would fall on them, in the spring-time of their love: Are you Man and Wife?

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## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SIXTH.

### THE TRUTH AT LAST.

Two days after the marriage—on Wednesday, the ninth of September—a packet of letters, received at Windygates, was forwarded by Lady Lundie's steward to Ham Farm.

With one exception, the letters were all addressed either to Sir Patrick or to his sister-in-law. The one exception was directed to "Arnold Brinkworth, Esq., care of Lady Lundie, Windygates House, Perthshire"—and the envelope was specially protected by a seal.

Noticing that the post-mark was "Glasgow," Sir Patrick (to whom the letter had been delivered) looked with a certain distrust at the handwriting on the address. It was not known to him—but it was obviously the handwriting of a woman. Lady Lundie was sitting opposite to him at the table. He said, carelessly, "A letter for Arnold"—and pushed it across to her. Her ladyship took up the letter, and dropped it, the

instant she looked at the handwriting, as if it had burned her fingers.

"The Person again!" exclaimed Lady Lundie. "The Person, presuming to address Arnold Brinkworth, at my house!"

"Miss Silvester?" asked Sir Patrick.

"No," said her ladyship, shutting her teeth with a snap. "The Person may insult me by addressing a letter to my care. But the Person's name shall not pollute my lips. Not even in your house, Sir Patrick. Not even to please *you*."

Sir Patrick was sufficiently answered. After all that had happened—after her farewell letter to Blanche—here was Miss Silvester writing to Blanche's husband, of her own accord! It was unaccountable, to say the least of it. He took the letter back, and looked at it again. Lady Lundie's steward was a methodical man. He had indorsed each letter received at Windygates with the date of its delivery. The letter addressed to Arnold had been delivered on Monday, the seventh of September—on Arnold's wedding-day.

What did it mean?

It was pure waste of time to inquire. Sir Patrick rose to lock the letter up in one of the drawers of the writing-table behind him. Lady Lundie interfered (in the interest of morality).

"Sir Patrick!"

"Yes?"

"Don't you consider it your duty to open that letter?"

"My dear lady! what can you possibly be thinking of?"

The most virtuous of living women had her answer ready on the spot.

"I am thinking," said Lady Lundie, "of Arnold's moral welfare."

Sir Patrick smiled. On the long list of those respectable disguises under which we assert our own importance, or gratify our own love of meddling in our neighbor's affairs, a moral regard for the welfare of others figures in the foremost place, and stands deservedly as number one.

"We shall probably hear from Arnold in a day or two," said Sir Patrick, locking the letter up in the drawer. "He shall have it as soon as I know where to send it to him."

The next morning brought news of the bride and bridegroom.

They reported themselves to be too supremely happy to care where they lived, so long as they lived together. Every question but the question of love was left in the competent hands of their courier. This sensible and trustworthy man had decided that Paris was not to be thought of as a place of residence, by any sane human being, in the month of September. He had arranged that they were to leave for Baden—on their way to Switzerland—on the tenth. Letters were accordingly to be addressed to that place, until further notice. If the courier liked Baden, they would probably stay there for some time. If the courier took a fancy for the mountains, they would in that case go on to Switzerland. In

the meanwhile nothing mattered to Arnold but Blanche—and nothing mattered to Blanche but Arnold.

Sir Patrick re-directed Anne Silvester's letter to Arnold, at the Poste Restante, Baden. A second letter, which had arrived that morning (addressed to Arnold in a legal handwriting, and bearing the post-mark of Edinburgh), was forwarded in the same way, and at the same time.

Two days later Ham Farm was deserted by the guests. Lady Lundie had gone back to Windygates. The rest had separated in their different directions. Sir Patrick, who also contemplated returning to Scotland, remained behind for a week—a solitary prisoner in his own country house. Accumulated arrears of business, with which it was impossible for his steward to deal single-handed, obliged him to remain at his estates in Kent for that time. To a man without a taste for partridge-shooting the ordeal was a trying one. Sir Patrick got through the day with the help of his business and his books. In the evening the rector of a neighboring parish drove over to dinner, and engaged his host at the noble but obsolete game of piquet. They arranged to meet at each other's houses on alternate days. The rector was an admirable player; and Sir Patrick, though a born Presbyterian, blessed the Church of England from the bottom of his heart.

Three more days passed. Business at Ham Farm began to draw to an end. The time for Sir Patrick's journey to Scotland came nearer. The two partners at piquet agreed to meet for a



final game, on the next night, at the rector's house. But (let us take comfort in remembering it) our superiors in Church and State are as completely at the mercy of circumstances as the humblest and the poorest of us. That last game of piquet between the baronet and the parson was never to be played.

On the afternoon of the fourth day Sir Patrick came in from a drive, and found a letter from Arnold waiting for him, which had been delivered by the second post.

Judged by externals only, it was a letter of an unusually perplexing—possibly also of an unusually interesting—kind. Arnold was one of the last persons in the world whom any of his friends would have suspected of being a lengthy correspondent. Here, nevertheless, was a letter from him, of three times the customary bulk and weight—and, apparently, of more than common importance, in the matter of news, besides. At the top of the envelope was marked "*Immediate.*" And at one side (also underlined) was the ominous word, "*Private.*"

"Nothing wrong, I hope?" thought Sir Patrick.

He opened the envelope.

Two inclosures fell out on the table. He looked at them for a moment. They were the two letters which he had forwarded to Baden. The third letter remaining in his hand, and occupying a double sheet, was from Arnold himself. Sir Patrick read Arnold's letter first. It was dated "Baden," and it began as follows:

“My dear Sir Patrick—Don’t be alarmed, if you can possibly help it. I am in a terrible mess.”

Sir Patrick looked up for a moment from the letter. Given a young man who dates from “Baden,” and declares himself to be in “a terrible mess,” as representing the circumstances of the case—what is the interpretation to be placed on them? Sir Patrick drew the inevitable conclusion. Arnold had been gambling.

He shook his head, and went on with the letter.

“I must say, dreadful as it is, that I am not to blame—nor she either, poor thing.”

Sir Patrick paused again. “She?” Blanche had apparently been gambling too! Nothing was wanting to complete the picture but an announcement in the next sentence, presenting the courier as carried away, in his turn, by the insatiate passion for play. Sir Patrick resumed:

“You cannot, I am sure, expect *me* to have known the law. And as for poor Miss Silvester—”

“Miss Silvester?” What had Miss Silvester to do with it? And what could be the meaning of the reference to “the law?”

Sir Patrick had read the letter, thus far, standing up. A vague distrust stole over him at the appearance of Miss Silvester’s name in connection with the lines which had preceded it. He felt nothing approaching to a clear prevision of what was to come. Some indescribable influence was at work in him, which shook his nerves, and made him feel the infirmities of his

age (as it seemed) on a sudden. It went no further than that. He was obliged to sit down: he was obliged to wait a moment before he went on.

The letter proceeded, in these words:

“And, as for poor Miss Silvester, though she felt, as she reminds me, some misgivings—still, she never could have foreseen, being no lawyer either, how it was to end. I hardly know the best way to break it to you. I can’t, and won’t, believe it myself. But even if it should be true, I am quite sure you will find a way out of it for us. I will stick at nothing, and Miss Silvester (as you will see by her letter) will stick at nothing either, to set things right. Of course, I have not said one word to my darling Blanche, who is quite happy, and suspects nothing. All this, dear Sir Patrick, is very badly written, I am afraid, but it is meant to prepare you, and to put the best side on matters at starting. However, the truth must be told—and shame on the Scotch law is what *I* say. This it is, in short: Geoffrey Delamayn is even a greater scoundrel than you think him; and I bitterly repent (as things have turned out) having held my tongue that night when you and I had our private talk at Ham Farm. You will think I am mixing two things up together. But I am not. Please to keep this about Geoffrey in your mind, and piece it together with what I have next to say. The worst is still to come. Miss Silvester’s letter (inclosed) tells me this terrible thing. You must know that I went to her privately, as Geoffrey’s messenger, on the day of the lawn-party at Windygates.

Well—how it could have happened, Heaven only knows—but there is reason to fear that I married her, without being aware of it myself, in August last, at the Craig Fernie inn.”

The letter dropped from Sir Patrick’s hand. He sank back in the chair, stunned for the moment, under the shock that had fallen on him.

He rallied, and rose bewildered to his feet. He took a turn in the room. He stopped, and summoned his will, and steadied himself by main force. He picked up the letter, and read the last sentence again. His face flushed. He was on the point of yielding himself to a useless outburst of anger against Arnold, when his better sense checked him at the last moment. “One fool in the family is enough,” he said. “*My* business in this dreadful emergency is to keep my head clear for Blanche’s sake.”

He waited once more, to make sure of his own composure—and turned again to the letter, to see what the writer had to say for himself, in the way of explanation and excuse.

Arnold had plenty to say—with the drawback of not knowing how to say it. It was hard to decide which quality in his letter was most marked—the total absence of arrangement, or the total absence of reserve. Without beginning, middle, or end, he told the story of his fatal connection with the troubles of Anne Silvester, from the memorable day when Geoffrey Delamayn sent him to Craig Fernie, to the equally memorable night when Sir Patrick had tried vainly to make him open his lips at Ham Farm.

"I own I have behaved like a fool," the letter concluded, "in keeping Geoffrey Delamayn's secret for him—as things have turned out. But how could I tell upon him without compromising Miss Silvester? Read her letter, and you will see what she says, and how generously she releases me. It's no use saying I am sorry I wasn't more cautious. The mischief is done. I'll stick at nothing—as I have said before—to undo it. Only tell me what is the first step I am to take; and, as long as it don't part me from Blanche, rely on my taking it. Waiting to hear from you, I remain, dear Sir Patrick, yours in great perplexity, Arnold Brinkworth."

Sir Patrick folded the letter, and looked at the two inclosures lying on the table. His eye was hard, his brow was frowning, as he put his hand to take up Anne's letter. The letter from Arnold's agent in Edinburgh lay nearer to him. As it happened, he took that first.

It was short enough, and clearly enough written, to invite a reading before he put it down again. The lawyer reported that he had made the necessary inquiries at Glasgow, with this result: Anne had been traced to The Sheep's Head Hotel. She had lain there utterly helpless, from illness, until the beginning of September. She had been advertised, without result, in the Glasgow newspapers. On the 5th of September she had sufficiently recovered to be able to leave the hotel. She had been seen at the railway station on the same day—but from that point all trace of her had been lost once more. The lawyer

had accordingly stopped the proceedings, and now waited further instructions from his client.

This letter was not without its effect in encouraging Sir Patrick to suspend the harsh and hasty judgment of Anne, which any man, placed in his present situation, must have been inclined to form. Her illness claimed its small share of sympathy. Her friendless position—so plainly and so sadly revealed by the advertising in the newspapers—pleaded for merciful construction of faults committed, if faults there were. Gravely, but not angrily, Sir Patrick opened her letter—the letter that cast a doubt on his niece's marriage.

Thus Anne Silvester wrote:

“GLASGOW, *September 5.*

“DEAR MR. BRINKWORTH — Nearly three weeks since I attempted to write to you from this place. I was seized by sudden illness while I was engaged over my letter; and from that time to this I have laid helpless in bed—very near, as they tell me, to death. I was strong enough to be dressed, and to sit up for a little while yesterday and the day before. To-day I have made a better advance toward recovery. I can hold my pen, and control my thoughts. The first use to which I put this improvement is to write these lines.

“I am going (so far as I know) to surprise—possibly to alarm—you. There is no escaping from it, for you or for me: it must be done.

“Thinking of how best to introduce what I



am now obliged to say, I can find no better way than this. I must ask you to take your memory back to a day which we have both bitter reason to regret—the day when Geoffrey Delamayn sent you to see me at the inn at Craig Fernie.

“You may possibly not remember—it unhappily produced no impression on you at the time—that I felt, and expressed, more than once on that occasion, a very great dislike to your passing me off on the people of the inn as your wife. It was necessary to my being permitted to remain at Craig Fernie that you should do so. I knew this; but still I shrank from it. It was impossible for me to contradict you, without involving you in the painful consequences, and running the risk of making a scandal which might find its way to Blanche’s ears. I knew this also; but still my conscience reproached me. It was a vague feeling. I was quite unaware of the actual danger in which you were placing yourself, or I would have spoken out, no matter what came of it. I had what is called a presentiment that you were not acting discreetly—nothing more. As I love and honor my mother’s memory—as I trust in the mercy of God—this is the truth.

“You left the inn the next morning, and we have not met since.

“A few days after you went away my anxieties grew more than I could bear alone. I went secretly to Windygates, and had an interview with Blanche.

“She was absent for a few minutes from the



room in which we had met. In that interval I saw Geoffrey Delamayn for the first time since I had left him at Lady Lundie's lawn-party. He treated me as if I was a stranger. He told me that he had found out all that had passed between us at the inn. He said he had taken a lawyer's opinion. Oh, Mr. Brinkworth! how can I break it to you? how can I write the words which repeat what he said to me next? It must be done. Cruel as it is, it must be done. He refused to my face to marry me. He said I was married already. He said I was your wife.

"Now you know why I have referred you to what I felt (and confessed to feeling) when we were together at Craig Fernie. If you think hard thoughts, and say hard words of me, I can claim no right to blame you. I am innocent—and yet it is my fault.

"My head swims, and the foolish tears are rising in spite of me. I must leave off, and rest a little.

"I have been sitting at the window, and watching the people in the street as they go by. They are all strangers. But, somehow, the sight of them seems to rest my mind. The hum of the great city gives me heart, and helps me to go on.

"I cannot trust myself to write of the man who has betrayed us both. Disgraced and broken as I am, there is something still left in me which lifts me above *him*. If he came repentant at this moment, and offered me all that rank and



"I MUST LEAVE OFF, AND REST A LITTLE."

—Man and Wife, Vol. Three, page 550.



wealth and worldly consideration can give, I would rather be what I am now than be his wife.

“Let me speak of you, and (for Blanche’s sake) let me speak of myself.

“I ought, no doubt, to have waited to see you at Windygates, and to have told you at once of what had happened. But I was weak and ill; and the shock of hearing what I heard fell so heavily on me that I fainted. After I came to myself I was so horrified, when I thought of you and Blanche, that a sort of madness possessed me. I had but one idea—the idea of running away and hiding myself.

“My mind got clearer and quieter on the way to this place; and, arrived here, I did what I hope and believe was the best thing I could do. I consulted two lawyers. They differed in opinion as to whether we were married or not—according to the law which decides on such things in Scotland. The first said Yes. The second said No—but advised me to write immediately and tell you the position in which you stood. I attempted to write the same day, and fell ill as you know.

“Thank God, the delay that has happened is of no consequence. I asked Blanche, at Windygates, when you were to be married—and she told me not until the end of the autumn. It is only the fifth of September now. You have plenty of time before you. For all our sakes, make good use of it.

“What are you to do?

“Go at once to Sir Patrick Lundie, and show  
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him this letter. Follow his advice—no matter how it may affect *me*. I should ill requite your kindness, I should be false indeed to the love I bear to Blanche, if I hesitated to brave any exposure that may now be necessary in your interests and in hers. You have been all that is generous, all that is delicate, all that is kind in this matter. You have kept my disgraceful secret—I am quite sure of it—with the fidelity of an honorable man who has had a woman's reputation placed in his charge. I release you, with my whole heart, dear Mr. Brinkworth, from your pledge. I entreat you, on my knees, to consider yourself free to reveal the truth. I will make any acknowledgment, on my side, that is needful under the circumstances—no matter how public it may be. Release yourself at any price; and then, and not till then, give back your regard to the miserable woman who has laden you with the burden of her sorrow, and darkened your life for a moment with the shadow of her shame.

“Pray don't think there is any painful sacrifice involved in this. The quieting of my own mind is involved in it—and that is all.

“What has life left for *me*? Nothing but the barren necessity of living. When I think of the future now, my mind passes over the years that may be left to me in this world. Sometimes I dare to hope that the Divine Mercy of Christ—which once pleaded on earth for a woman like me—may plead, when death has taken me, for my spirit in Heaven. Sometimes I dare to hope

that I may see my mother, and Blanche's mother, in the better world. Their hearts were bound together as the hearts of sisters while they were here; and they left to their children the legacy of their love. Oh, help me to say, if we meet again, that not in vain I promised to be a sister to Blanche! The debt I owe to her is the hereditary debt of my mother's gratitude. And what am I now? An obstacle in the way of the happiness of her life. Sacrifice me to that happiness, for God's sake! It is the one thing I have left to live for. Again and again I say it—I care nothing for myself. I have no right to be considered; I have no wish to be considered. Tell the whole truth about me, and call me to bear witness to it as publicly as you please!

“I have waited a little, once more, trying to think, before I close my letter, what there may be still left to write.

“I cannot think of anything left but the duty of informing you how you may find me, if you wish to write—or if it is thought necessary that we should meet again.

“One word before I tell you this.

“It is impossible for me to guess what you will do, or what you will be advised to do by others, when you get my letter. I don't even know that you may not already have heard of what your position is from Geoffrey Delamayn himself. In this event, or in the event of your thinking it desirable to take Blanche into your confidence, I venture to suggest that you should appoint some

person whom you can trust to see me on your behalf—or, if you cannot do this, that you should see me in the presence of a third person. The man who has not hesitated to betray us both, will not hesitate to misrepresent us in the vilest way, if he can do it in the future. For your own sake, let us be careful to give lying tongues no opportunity of assailing your place in Blanche's estimation. Don't act so as to risk putting yourself in a false position *again*! Don't let it be possible that a feeling unworthy of her should be roused in the loving and generous nature of your future wife!

"This written, I may now tell you how to communicate with me after I have left this place.

"You will find on the slip of paper inclosed the name and address of the second of the two lawyers whom I consulted in Glasgow. It is arranged between us that I am to inform him, by letter, of the next place to which I remove, and that he is to communicate the information either to you or to Sir Patrick Lundie, on your applying for it personally or by writing. I don't yet know myself where I may find refuge. Nothing is certain but that I cannot, in my present state of weakness, travel far.

"If you wonder why I move at all until I am stronger, I can only give a reason which may appear fanciful and overstrained.

"I have been informed that I was advertised in the Glasgow newspapers during the time when I lay at this hotel, a stranger at the point



of death. Trouble has perhaps made me morbidly suspicious. I am afraid of what may happen if I stay here, after my place of residence has been made publicly known. So, as soon as I can move, I go away in secret. It will be enough for me if I can find rest and peace in some quiet place in the country round Glasgow. You need feel no anxiety about my means of living. I have money enough for all that I need—and, if I get well again, I know how to earn my bread.

“I send no message to Blanche—I dare not till this is over. Wait till she is your happy wife; and then give her a kiss, and say it comes from Anne.

“Try and forgive me, dear Mr. Brinkworth. I have said all. Yours gratefully,

“ANNE SILVESTER.”

Sir Patrick put the letter down with unfeigned respect for the woman who had written it.

Something of the personal influence which Anne exercised more or less over all the men with whom she came in contact seemed to communicate itself to the old lawyer through the medium of her letter. His thoughts perversely wandered away from the serious and pressing question of his niece's position into a region of purely speculative inquiry relating to Anne. What infatuation (he asked himself) had placed that noble creature at the mercy of such a man as Geoffrey Delamayn?

We have all, at one time or another in our

lives, been perplexed as Sir Patrick was perplexed now.

If we know anything by experience, we know that women cast themselves away impulsively on unworthy men, and that men ruin themselves headlong for unworthy women. We have the institution of Divorce actually among us, existing mainly because the two sexes are perpetually placing themselves in these anomalous relations toward each other. And yet, at every fresh instance which comes before us, we persist in being astonished to find that the man and the woman have not chosen each other on rational and producible grounds! We expect human passion to act on logical principles; and human fallibility—with love for its guide—to be above all danger of making a mistake! Ask the wisest among Anne Silvester's sex what they saw to rationally justify them in choosing the men to whom they have given their hearts and their lives, and you will be putting a question to those wise women which they never once thought of putting to themselves. Nay, more still—look into your own experience, and say frankly, Could you justify your own excellent choice at the time when you irrevocably made it? Could you have put your reasons on paper when you first owned to yourself that you loved him? And would the reasons have borne critical inspection if you had?

Sir Patrick gave it up in despair. The interests of his niece were at stake. He wisely determined to rouse his mind by occupying himself

with the practical necessities of the moment. It was essential to send an apology to the rector, in the first place, so as to leave the evening at his disposal for considering what preliminary course of conduct he should advise Arnold to pursue.

After writing a few lines of apology to his partner at piquet—assigning family business as the excuse for breaking his engagement—Sir Patrick rang the bell. The faithful Duncan appeared, and saw at once in his master's face that something had happened.

"Send a man with this to the Rectory," said Sir Patrick. "I can't dine out to-day. I must have a chop at home."

"I am afraid, Sir Patrick—if I may be excused for remarking it—you have had some bad news?"

"The worst possible news, Duncan. I can't tell you about it now. Wait within hearing of the bell. In the meantime let nobody interrupt me. If the steward himself comes, I can't see him."

After thinking it over carefully, Sir Patrick decided that there was no alternative but to send a message to Arnold and Blanche, summoning them back to England in the first place. The necessity of questioning Arnold, in the minutest detail, as to everything that had happened between Anne Silvester and himself at the Craig Fernie inn was the first and foremost necessity of the case.

At the same time it appeared to be desirable,

for Blanche's sake, to keep her in ignorance, for the present at least, of what had happened. Sir Patrick met this difficulty with characteristic ingenuity and readiness of resource.

He wrote a telegram to Arnold, expressed in the following terms:

“Your letter and inclosures received. Return to Ham Farm as soon as you conveniently can. Keep the thing still a secret from Blanche. Tell her, as the reason for coming back, that the lost trace of Anne Silvester has been recovered, and that there may be reasons for her returning to England before anything further can be done.”

Duncan having been dispatched to the station with this message, Duncan's master proceeded to calculate the question of time.

Arnold would in all probability receive the telegram at Baden on the next day, September the seventeenth. In three days more he and Blanche might be expected to reach Ham Farm. During the interval thus placed at his disposal Sir Patrick would have ample time in which to recover himself, and to see his way to acting for the best in the alarming emergency that now confronted him.

On the nineteenth Sir Patrick received a telegram informing him that he might expect to see the young couple late in the evening on the twentieth.

Late in the evening the sound of carriage-wheels was audible on the drive; and Sir Pat-

rick, opening the door of his room, heard the familiar voices in the hall.

"Well!" cried Blanche, catching sight of him at the door, "is Anne found?"

"Not just yet, my dear."

"Is there news of her?"

"Yes."

"Am I in time to be of use?"

"In excellent time. You shall hear all about it to-morrow. Go and take off your traveling-things, and come down again to supper as soon as you can."

Blanche kissed him, and went on upstairs. She had, as her uncle thought in the glimpse he had caught of her, been improved by her marriage. It had quieted and steadied her. There were graces in her look and manner which Sir Patrick had not noticed before. Arnold, on his side, appeared to less advantage. He was restless and anxious; his position with Miss Silvester seemed to be preying on his mind. As soon as his young wife's back was turned, he appealed to Sir Patrick in an eager whisper.

"I hardly dare ask you what I have got it on my mind to say," he began. "I must bear it, if you are angry with me, Sir Patrick. But—only tell me one thing. Is there a way out of it for us? Have you thought of that?"

"I cannot trust myself to speak of it clearly and composedly to-night," said Sir Patrick. "Be satisfied if I tell you that I have thought it all out—and wait for the rest till to-morrow."

Other persons concerned in the coming drama

had had past difficulties to think out, and future movements to consider, during the interval occupied by Arnold and Blanche on their return journey to England. Between the seventeenth and the twentieth of September Geoffrey Delamayn had left Swanhaven, on the way to his new training quarters in the neighborhood in which the Foot-race at Fulham was to be run. Between the same dates, also, Captain Newenden had taken the opportunity, while passing through London on his way south, to consult his solicitors. The object of the conference was to find means of discovering an anonymous letter-writer in Scotland, who had presumed to cause serious annoyance to Mrs. Glenarm.

Thus, by ones and twos, converging from widely distant quarters, they were now beginning to draw together, in the near neighborhood of the great city which was soon destined to assemble them all, for the first and the last time in this world, face to face.

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## CHAPTER THE THIRTY-SEVENTH.

### THE WAY OUT.

BREAKFAST was just over. Blanche, seeing a pleasantly-idle morning before her, proposed to Arnold to take a stroll in the grounds.

The garden was bright with sunshine, and the bride was bright with good humor. She caught her uncle's eye, looking at her admiringly, and



paid him a little compliment in return. "You have no idea," she said, "how nice it is to be back at Ham Farm!"

"I am to understand then," rejoined Sir Patrick, "that I am forgiven for interrupting the honeymoon?"

"You are more than forgiven for interrupting it," said Blanche—"you are thanked. As a married woman," she proceeded, with the air of a matron of at least twenty years' standing, "I have been thinking the subject over, and I have arrived at the conclusion that a honeymoon which takes the form of a tour on the Continent is one of our national abuses which stands in need of reform. When you are in love with each other (I consider a marriage without love to be no marriage at all), what do you want with the excitement of seeing strange places? Isn't it excitement enough, and isn't it strange enough, to a newly-married woman to see such a total novelty as a husband? What is the most interesting object on the face of creation to a man in Arnold's position? The Alps? Certainly not! The most interesting object is the wife. And the proper time for a bridal tour is the time—say ten or a dozen years later—when you are beginning (not to get tired of each other; that's out of the question) but to get a little too well used to each other. Then take your tour to Switzerland—and you give the Alps a chance. A succession of honeymoon trips, in the autumn of married life—there is my proposal for an improvement on the present state of things! Come into



the garden, Arnold; and let us calculate how long it will be before we get weary of each other, and want the beauties of nature to keep us company."

Arnold looked appealingly to Sir Patrick. Not a word had passed between them, as yet, on the serious subject of Anne Silvester's letter. Sir Patrick undertook the responsibility of making the necessary excuses to Blanche.

"Forgive me," he said, "if I ask leave to interfere with your monopoly of Arnold for a little while. I have something to say to him about his property in Scotland. Will you leave him with me, if I promise to release him as soon as possible?"

Blanche smiled graciously. "You shall have him as long as you like, uncle. There's your hat," she added, tossing it to her husband, gayly. "I brought it in for you when I got my own. You will find me on the lawn."

She nodded, and went out.

"Let me hear the worst at once, Sir Patrick," Arnold began. "Is it serious? Do you think I am to blame?"

"I will answer your last question first," said Sir Patrick. "Do I think you are to blame? Yes—in this way. You committed an act of unpardonable rashness when you consented to go, as Geoffrey Delamayn's messenger, to Miss Silvester at the inn. Having once placed yourself in that false position, you could hardly have acted, afterward, otherwise than you did. You could not be expected to know the Scotch law.

And, as an honorable man, you were bound to keep a secret confided to you, in which the reputation of a woman was concerned. Your first and last error in this matter was the fatal error of involving yourself in responsibilities which belonged exclusively to another man."

"The man had saved my life," pleaded Arnold—"and I believed I was giving service for service to my dearest friend."

"As to your other question," proceeded Sir Patrick. "Do I consider your position to be a serious one? Most assuredly, I do! So long as we are not absolutely certain that Blanche is your lawful wife, the position is more than serious: it is unendurable. I maintain the opinion, mind, out of which (thanks to your honorable silence) that scoundrel Delamayn contrived to cheat me. I told him, what I now tell you—that your sayings and doings at Craig Fernie do *not* constitute a marriage, according to Scottish law. But," pursued Sir Patrick, holding up a warning forefinger at Arnold, "you have read it in Miss Silvester's letter, and you may now take it also as a result of my experience, that no individual opinion, in a matter of this kind, is to be relied on. Of two lawyers, consulted by Miss Silvester at Glasgow, one draws a directly opposite conclusion to mine, and decides that you and she *are* married. I believe him to be wrong; but, in our situation, we have no other choice than to boldly encounter the view of the case which he represents. In plain English, we must begin by looking the worst in the face."

Arnold twisted the traveling-hat which Blanche had thrown to him, nervously, in both hands. "Supposing the worst comes to the worst," he asked, "what will happen?"

Sir Patrick shook his head.

"It is not easy to tell you," he said, "without entering into the legal aspect of the case. I shall only puzzle you if I do that. Suppose we look at the matter in its social bearings—I mean, as it may possibly affect you and Blanche, and your unborn children?"

Arnold gave the hat a tighter twist than ever. "I never thought of the children," he said, with a look of consternation.

"The children may present themselves," returned Sir Patrick, dryly, "for all that. Now listen. It may have occurred to your mind that the plain way out of our present dilemma is for you and Miss Silvester, respectively, to affirm what we know to be the truth—namely, that you never had the slightest intention of marrying each other. Beware of founding any hopes on any such remedy as that! If you reckon on it, you reckon without Geoffrey Delamayn. He is interested, remember, in proving you and Miss Silvester to be man and wife. Circumstances may arise—I won't waste time in guessing at what they may be—which will enable a third person to produce the landlady and the waiter at Craig Fernie in evidence against you—and to assert that your declaration and Miss Silvester's declaration are the result of collusion between you two. Don't start! Such things have hap-

pened before now. Miss Silvester is poor, and Blanche is rich. You may be made to stand in the awkward position of a man who is denying his marriage with a poor woman, in order to establish his marriage with an heiress: Miss Silvester presumably aiding the fraud, with two strong interests of her own as inducements—the interest of asserting the claim to be the wife of a man of rank, and the interest of earning her reward in money for resigning you to Blanche. There is a case which a scoundrel might set up—and with some appearance of truth too—in a court of justice!”

“Surely the law wouldn’t allow him to do that?”

“The law will argue anything, with anybody who will pay the law for the use of its brains and its time. Let that view of the matter alone now. Delamayn can set the case going, if he likes, without applying to any lawyer to help him. He has only to cause a report to reach Blanche’s ears which publicly asserts that she is not your lawful wife. With her temper, do you suppose she would leave us a minute’s peace till the matter was cleared up? Or take it the other way. Comfort yourself, if you will, with the idea that this affair will trouble nobody in the present. How are we to know it may not turn up in the future under circumstances which may place the legitimacy of your children in doubt? We have a man to deal with who sticks at nothing. We have a state of the law which can only be described as one scandalous uncertainty from

beginning to end. And we have two people (Bishopriggs and Mrs. Inchbare) who can, and will, speak to what took place between you and Anne Silvester at the inn. For Blanche's sake, and for the sake of your unborn children, we must face this matter on the spot—and settle it at once and forever. The question before us now is this: Shall we open the proceedings by communicating with Miss Silvester or not?"

At that important point in the conversation they were interrupted by the re-appearance of Blanche. Had she, by any accident, heard what they had been saying?

No; it was the old story of most interruptions. Idleness, that considers nothing, had come to look at Industry that bears everything. It is a law of nature, apparently, that the people in this world who have nothing to do cannot support the sight of an uninterrupted occupation in the hands of their neighbors. Blanche produced a new specimen from Arnold's collection of hats. "I have been thinking about it in the garden," she said, quite seriously. "Here is the brown one with the high crown. You look better in this than in the white one with the low crown. I have come to change them, that's all." She changed the hats with Arnold, and went on, without the faintest suspicion that she was in the way. "Wear the brown one when you come out—and come soon, dear. I won't stay an instant longer, uncle—I wouldn't interrupt you for the world."

She kissed her hand to Sir Patrick, and smiled at her husband, and went out.

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“What were we saying?” asked Arnold. “It’s awkward to be interrupted in this way, isn’t it?”

“If I know anything of female human nature,” returned Sir Patrick, composedly, “your wife will be in and out of the room, in that way, the whole morning. I give her ten minutes, Arnold, before she changes her mind again on the serious and weighty subject of the white hat and the brown. These little interruptions—otherwise quite charming—raised a doubt in my mind. Wouldn’t it be wise (I ask myself), if we made a virtue of necessity, and took Blanche into the conversation? What do you say to calling her back and telling her the truth?”

Arnold started and changed color.

“There are difficulties in the way,” he said.

“My good fellow! at every step of this business there are difficulties in the way. Sooner or later, your wife must know what has happened. The time for telling her is, no doubt, a matter for your decision, not mine. All I say is this: Consider whether the disclosure won’t come from you with a better grace, if you make it before you are fairly driven to the wall, and obliged to open your lips.”

Arnold rose to his feet—took a turn in the room—sat down again—and looked at Sir Pat-



rick, with the expression of a thoroughly bewildered and thoroughly helpless man.

"I don't know what to do," he said. "It beats me altogether. The truth is, Sir Patrick, I was fairly forced, at Craig Fernie, into deceiving Blanche—in what might seem to her a very unfeeling and a very unpardonable way."

"That sounds awkward! What do you mean?"

"I'll try and tell you. You remember when you went to the inn to see Miss Silvester? Well, being there privately at the time, of course I was obliged to keep out of your way."

"I see! And, when Blanche came afterward, you were obliged to hide from Blanche, exactly as you had hidden from me?"

"Worse even than that! A day or two later, Blanche took me into her confidence. She spoke to me of her visit to the inn, as if I was a perfect stranger to the circumstances. She told me to my face, Sir Patrick, of the invisible man who had kept so strangely out of her way—without the faintest suspicion that I was the man. And I never opened my lips to set her right! I was obliged to be silent, or I must have betrayed Miss Silvester. What will Blanche think of me if I tell her now? That's the question!"

Blanche's name had barely passed her husband's lips before Blanche herself verified Sir Patrick's prediction, by re-appearing at the open French window, with the superseded white hat in her hand.

"Haven't you done yet!" she exclaimed. "I



am shocked, uncle, to interrupt you again—but these horrid hats of Arnold's are beginning to weigh upon my mind. On reconsideration, I think the white hat with the low crown is the most becoming of the two. Change again, dear. Yes! the brown hat is hideous. There's a beggar at the gate. Before I go quite distracted, I shall give him the brown hat, and have done with the difficulty in that manner. Am I very much in the way of business? I'm afraid I must appear restless? Indeed, I *am* restless. I can't imagine what is the matter with me this morning."

"I can tell you," said Sir Patrick, in his gravest and driest manner. "You are suffering, Blanche, from a malady which is exceedingly common among the young ladies of England. As a disease it is quite incurable—and the name of it is Nothing-to-Do."

Blanche dropped her uncle a smart little courtesy. "You might have told me I was in the way in fewer words than that." She whisked round, kicked the disgraced brown hat out into the veranda before her, and left the two gentlemen alone once more.

"Your position with your wife, Arnold," resumed Sir Patrick, returning gravely to the matter in hand, "is certainly a difficult one." He paused, thinking of the evening when he and Blanche had illustrated the vagueness of Mrs. Inchbare's description of the man at the inn, by citing Arnold himself as being one of the hun-

dreds of innocent people who answered to it! "Perhaps," he added, "the situation is even more difficult than you suppose. It would have been certainly easier for *you*—and it would have looked more honorable in *her* estimation—if you had made the inevitable confession before your marriage. I am, in some degree, answerable for your not having done this—as well as for the far more serious dilemma with Miss Silvester in which you now stand. If I had not innocently hastened your marriage with Blanche, Miss Silvester's admirable letter would have reached us in ample time to prevent mischief. It's useless to dwell on that now. Cheer up, Arnold! I am bound to show you the way out of the labyrinth, no matter what the difficulties may be—and, please God, I will do it!"

He pointed to a table at the other end of the room, on which writing materials were placed. "I hate moving the moment I have had my breakfast," he said. "We won't go into the library. Bring me the pen and ink here."

"Are you going to write to Miss Silvester?"

"That is the question before us which we have not settled yet. Before I decide, I want to be in possession of the facts—down to the smallest detail of what took place between you and Miss Silvester at the inn. There is only one way of getting at those facts. I am going to examine you as if I had you before me in the witness-box in court."

With that preface, and with Arnold's letter from Baden in his hand as a brief to speak from,

Sir Patrick put his questions in clear and endless succession; and Arnold patiently and faithfully answered them all.

The examination proceeded uninterruptedly until it had reached that point in the progress of events at which Anne had crushed Geoffrey Delamayn's letter in her hand, and had thrown it from her indignantly to the other end of the room. There, for the first time, Sir Patrick dipped his pen in the ink, apparently intending to take a note. "Be very careful here," he said; "I want to know everything that you can tell me about that letter."

"The letter is lost," said Arnold.

"The letter has been stolen by Bishopriggs," returned Sir Patrick, "and is in the possession of Bishopriggs at this moment."

"Why, you know more about it than I do!" exclaimed Arnold.

"I sincerely hope not. I don't know what was inside the letter. Do you?"

"Yes. Part of it at least."

"Part of it?"

"There were two letters written on the same sheet of paper," said Arnold. "One of them was written by Geoffrey Delamayn—and that is the one I know about."

Sir Patrick started. His face brightened; he made a hasty note. "Go on!" he said, eagerly. "How came the letters to be written on the same sheet? Explain that!"

Arnold explained that Geoffrey, in the absence of anything else to write his excuses on to Anne,

had written to her on the fourth or blank page of a letter which had been addressed to him by Anne herself.

“Did you read that letter?” asked Sir Patrick.

“I might have read it if I had liked.”

“And you didn’t read it?”

“No.”

“Why?”

“Out of delicacy.”

Even Sir Patrick’s carefully trained temper was not proof against this. “That is the most misplaced act of delicacy I ever heard of in my life!” cried the old gentleman, warmly. “Never mind! it’s useless to regret it now. At any rate you read Delamayn’s answer to Miss Silvester’s letter?”

“Yes—I did.”

“Repeat it—as nearly as you can remember at this distance of time.”

“It was so short,” said Arnold, “that there is hardly anything to repeat. As well as I remember, Geoffrey said he was called away to London by his father’s illness. He told Miss Silvester to stop where she was; and he referred her to me as messenger. That’s all I recollect of it now.”

“Cudgel your brains, my good fellow! this is very important. Did he make no allusion to his engagement to marry Miss Silvester at Craig Fernie? Didn’t he try to pacify her by an apology of some sort?”

The question roused Arnold’s memory to make another effort.

"Yes," he answered. "Geoffrey said something about being true to his engagement, or keeping his promise, or words to that effect."

"You're sure of what you say now?"

"I am certain of it."

Sir Patrick made another note.

"Was the letter signed?" he asked, when he had done.

"Yes."

"And dated?"

"Yes." Arnold's memory made a second effort, after he had given his second affirmative answer. "Wait a little," he said. "I remember something else about the letter. It was not only dated. The time of day at which it was written was put as well."

"How came he to do that?"

"I suggested it. The latter was so short I felt ashamed to deliver it as it stood. I told him to put the time—so as to show her that he was obliged to write in a hurry. He put the time when the train started; and (I think) the time when the letter was written as well."

"And you delivered that letter to Miss Silvester, with your own hand, as soon as you saw her at the inn?"

"I did."

Sir Patrick made a third note, and pushed the paper away from him with an air of supreme satisfaction.

"I always suspected that lost letter to be an important document," he said, "or Bishopriggs would never have stolen it. We must get pos-

session of it, Arnold, at any sacrifice. The first thing to be done (exactly as I anticipated) is to write to the Glasgow lawyer, and find Miss Silvester."

"Wait a little!" cried a voice at the veranda. "Don't forget that I have come back from Baden to help you!"

Sir Patrick and Arnold both looked up. This time Blanche had heard the last words that had passed between them. She sat down at the table by Sir Patrick's side, and laid her hand caressingly on his shoulder.

"You are quite right, uncle," she said. "I *am* suffering this morning from the malady of having nothing to do. Are you going to write to Anne? Don't. Let me write instead."

Sir Patrick declined to resign the pen.

"The person who knows Miss Silvester's address," he said, "is a lawyer in Glasgow. I am going to write to the lawyer. When he sends us word where she is—then, Blanche, will be the time to employ your good offices in winning back your friend."

He drew the writing materials once more within his reach, and, suspending the remainder of Arnold's examination for the present, began his letter to Mr. Crum.

Blanche pleaded hard for an occupation of some sort. "Can nobody give me something to do?" she asked. "Glasgow is such a long way off, and waiting is such weary work. Don't sit

there staring at me, Arnold! Can't you suggest something?"

Arnold, for once, displayed an unexpected readiness of resource.

"If you want to write," he said, "you owe Lady Lundie a letter. It's three days since you heard from her—and you haven't answered her yet."

Sir Patrick paused, and looked up quickly from his writing-desk.

"Lady Lundie?" he muttered, inquiringly.

"Yes," said Blanche. "It's quite true; I owe her a letter. And of course I ought to tell her we have come back to England. She will be finely provoked when she hears why!"

The prospect of provoking Lady Lundie seemed to rouse Blanche's dormant energies. She took a sheet of her uncle's note-paper, and began writing her answer then and there.

Sir Patrick completed his communication to the lawyer—after a look at Blanche, which expressed anything rather than approval of her present employment. Having placed his completed note in the post-bag, he silently signed to Arnold to follow him into the garden. They went out together, leaving Blanche absorbed over her letter to her stepmother.

"Is my wife doing anything wrong?" asked Arnold, who had noticed the look which Sir Patrick had cast on Blanche.

"Your wife is making mischief as fast as her fingers can spread it."

Arnold stared.



"She must answer Lady Lundie's letter," he said.

"Unquestionably."

"And she must tell Lady Lundie we have come back."

"I don't deny it."

"Then what is the objection to her writing?"

Sir Patrick took a pinch of snuff, and pointed with his ivory cane to the bees humming busily about the flower-beds in the sunshine of the autumn morning.

"I'll show you the objection," he said. "Suppose Blanche told one of those inveterately intrusive insects that the honey in the flowers happens, through an unexpected accident, to have come to an end—do you think he would take the statement for granted? No. He would plunge headforemost into the nearest flower, and investigate it for himself."

"Well?" said Arnold.

"Well—there is Blanche in the breakfast-room telling Lady Lundie that the bridal tour happens, through an unexpected accident, to have come to an end. Do you think Lady Lundie is the sort of person to take the statement for granted? Nothing of the sort! Lady Lundie, like the bee, will insist on investigating for herself. How it will end, if she discovers the truth—and what new complications she may not introduce into a matter which, Heaven knows, is complicated enough already—I leave you to imagine. *My* poor powers of prevision are not equal to it."

Before Arnold could answer, Blanche joined them from the breakfast-room.

"I've done it," she said. "It was an awkward letter to write—and it's a comfort to have it over."

"You have done it, my dear," remarked Sir Patrick, quietly. "And it may be a comfort. But it's not over."

"What do you mean?"

"I think, Blanche, we shall hear from your stepmother by return of post."

(END OF PART ONE OF "MAN AND WIFE.")

END OF VOLUME THREE.







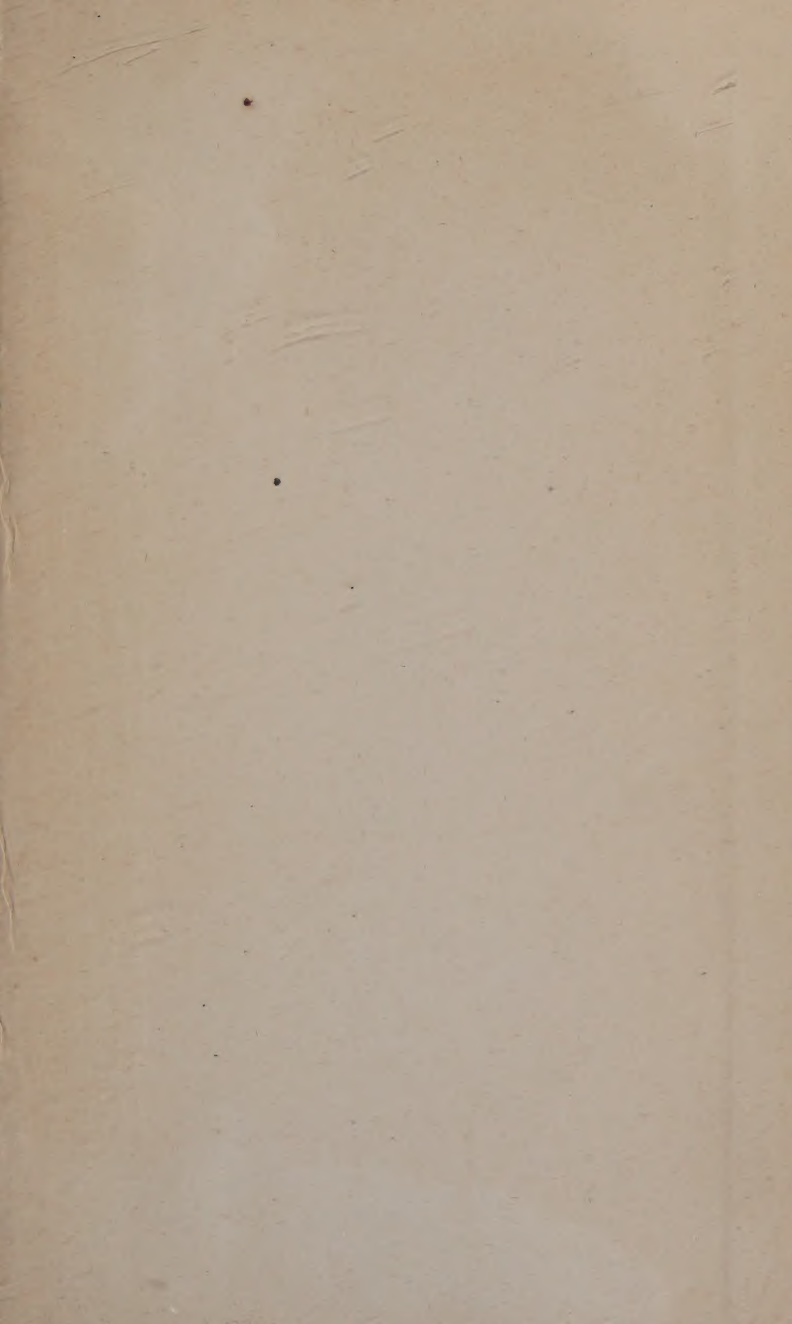












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